







SWAN OF FREEDOM

Being a Selection from the Correspondence
of
ANNA SEWARD
Edited, with a short biography and notes,
by
HESKETH PEARSON





To
SIDNEY MAIDEN

PREFACE

A new age that was remarkable for the smooth and limpid prose of Goldsmith and Boswell, the profound if slow-moving periods of Johnson, the sonorous cadences of Gibbon, and the limpid elegance of Cowper and Walpole, must have experienced a slight shock whenever Anna Seward condescended to write for the newspapers. She belonged to no school of style and she founded none; she was, and remains, her own unique, unbelievable self.

The Victorians thought her flowery sentences, which in many words did the service of one, monstrous. To us they are simply funny, as they were to her contemporaries. In that respect, as in several others, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been united in the chain in which the Victorians were bound, and which reached around the world.

Anna Seward was a little over fifty when she wrote the *Letters to the Deaf and Dumb*, and she had been blind for some years. It is not known how long she had been blind, but she was certainly blind when she wrote the *Letters*. The thing is certain, that she was blind when she wrote the *Letters*, and that she was blind when she wrote the *Letters*.

The *Letters to the Deaf and Dumb* were written in the year 1794, and they were published in the year 1795. They were written in the year 1794, and they were published in the year 1795. They were written in the year 1794, and they were published in the year 1795.

The *Letters to the Deaf and Dumb* were written in the year 1794, and they were published in the year 1795. They were written in the year 1794, and they were published in the year 1795. They were written in the year 1794, and they were published in the year 1795.

EXTRACT

We may, if it amuses us, consult Macaulay and all the passages of this book with extraordinary advantage on her quaint phrases. 'So the brilliant Senator has commenced Babyloniism,' she wrote of a friend. 'That is to say,' noted Macaulay in his copy of her letter, 'she has taken a house in town.' Occasionally she was really obscure. 'Your obliging present was extremely acceptable, she once wrote. The time-wasting quantity of dusky papers are great annoyances here.' Sir Walter Scott helped us at this point. 'Woodcocks,' he explained.

Her style will give us many such chances. But while checking over our warty things we may as well remember that she was not only an humorist but a great stylist, which does not mean that her words were forced or pedantic though they certainly were, but that her humor was in the right place.

—H. J.

the men and women who followed her and formed cliques; she was an honest and sincere human being.

It follows, of course, that she had been misread and called a liar by everyone with power to mind. Birkbeck Hill, the editor of *Boswell*, would not accept the truth of her life, and need so. Nor for that matter would Boswell himself, had the excuse of being drunk during her career been recorded by Anna Seward and not by her friend, moved that she should have succeeded where he had failed, especially as his hero, in her recent career, had only in a contest with a Quaker lady. The one reproduced here, is as good as anything in Boswell's book, better indeed than any of his lengthy duologues, and carries in every phrase the conviction of truth. The latest and best study of Johnson, Mr. Hugh Kingsmill's *Samuel Johnson* (1933), treats Anna Seward as a trustworthy witness.

An absolute sincerity and fidelity to fact is the distinctive feature of Anna Seward's descriptions of her contemporaries; and the consequent value of her opinions on them is enough to justify the appearance of a volume which, rigidly excluding those tedious critical disquisitions on the literature of past ages that take up the greater part of her private correspondence, concentrates on the people and habits of her time. And if, in our enjoyment of the matter here displayed, we laugh at the manner of displayal, we should not forget that truth is garbed in strange fashions and that while every fashion goes out of date the body of truth beneath it remains naked to the discerning eye.

Here, then, for the first time, Anna Seward may be judged on her real merits, without the disabling addition of her own unreadable criticisms, the derisive notes of dishonest commentators, or the patronising pleasantries of other people's biographers.

P R E F A C E

We may, if it amuses us, emulate Macaulay and fill the margins of this book with entertaining remarks on her quaint phrases. 'So the brilliant Sophia has commenced Babylonian,' she wrote of a friend. 'That is to say,' noted Macaulay in his copy of her letters, 'she has taken a house in town.' Occasionally she was really obscure. 'Your obliging present was extremely acceptable,' she once wrote: 'The transmigrating gentry of dusky pinion are great strangers here.' Sir Walter Scott helped us at this point. 'Woodcocks,' he explained.

Her style will give us many such chances. But while chuckling over our witty flings we may as well remember that she was not only an honest but a good woman; which does not mean that her morals were beyond reproach (though they certainly were), but that her heart was in the right place.

H.P.

She was born at Exam in Derbyshire, of which her father was rector, on December 12, 1742. When she was seven years old the family went to Lactfield, where her father became Canon Residentiary. Five years later they moved into the Bishop's Palace in the Cathedral Close, which soon became 'the resort of every person in that neighbourhood who had any taste for letters', and was Anna's home for the rest of her life. She was a precocious child. At the age of three she was encouraged by her father to read Shakespeare and Milton, and by the time she was nine could recite the first three books of *Paradise Lost*, her reflections proving that she knew what it was about. At twelve she began writing poetry and was not discouraged by her father until there seemed a likelihood that her verses would eclipse his.

Following the custom of those days the Sewards had a number of children, who either died in infancy or were still-born, but one other girl, Sarah, survived the hecatomb of off-spring. The childhood of Anna and Sarah seems to have been happy and healthy; though Anna was unfortunate enough to spend one of her holidays with a lady who believed in lots of food and no exercise. The result was that Anna put on weight to such a degree that a steady course of starvation and pedestrianism failed to restore her sylphlike shapeliness. For the rest of her life, her friends described her appearance as 'majestic', she referred to herself as 'portly', while her detractors were not above terming her 'obese'.

When Anna was still in her 'teens a girl named Honora Sneyd, aged five, came to live with the Sewards. Anna grew strangely attached to this child, taught her the classics, and eventually made her the object of a romantic devotion which, in happier circumstances, might have been bestowed upon a member of the sex more likely to profit by it. This is not to say

that she was indifferent to masculine attractions; but it so happened that two of the men she cared for did not return her affection, a third was financially embarrassed, and a fourth was already married. The first three may be disposed of at this point.

In 1762 she met a young military gentleman named Taylor. He had 'a dignified seriousness, an air of refined attachment, not to a present but an absent object'. Anna felt a wish, she says, 'to hear from himself the history of his mind, and to pour the balm of pity into the wounds of love'. He confessed that he was hopelessly in love with a certain lady. Anna's sympathy and interest were awakened to such an extent that after several weeks he gave her 'slight and transient hints of transferring attachment'. His regiment left Lichfield and they 'separated with tender, but not visibly impassioned regret'. Two years later they met accidentally in London, 'and acknowledged love', though Mr. Taylor's protestations were 'so apparently reasonable and serene, as not once to inspire an idea that, if authority should break our engagement, his passion would prove unextinguishable'. Authority, in the person of her father, did break the engagement; in fact, when the Canon heard that Mr. Taylor's income left much to be desired, he wrote him a furious letter and treated Anna to 'the hourly shot of angry eyes'.

Anna believed that so placid a lover as Mr. Taylor would soon recover from the disappointment, a conviction which left her heart 'vacant to receive another impression more instant and enthusiastic' than she had ever previously experienced. This happened in 1765, when a young man, Cornet Vyse, returned to Lichfield, after receiving a military education in France, 'with the united graces of early youth, the dignity of manhood, and with politeness which had the first polish. He was tall, and, in my eyes, extremely

lovely.' For three months Cornet Vyse was assiduously attentive and ardently attached to me. His behaviour then suddenly altered from exultant fervour to cool civility, bordering upon utter neglect. It seems that Cornet Vyse had ambition—he wanted to rise in the world and he wanted money—he turned his attention to one of Anna's wealthy and most intimate friends 'on whose bloom I had shed those mingled tears of indignation and loved and tendered which he had caused to flow'—and married her. After a period of extreme wretchedness, Anna recovered and 'heard then mated peal without a sigh'. From that time she decided that 'he could never be 'the object of lasting passion', and though 'he had many proposals of marriage, they did not suit her 'native enthusiasm' and she turned them down. It was perhaps fortunate for her that Cornet Vyse was ambitious, for though by studious steps and the careful choice of consorts he became a General, his first two wives died in childbirth within a year or so of marriage. To show there was no ill-feeling, Anna wrote a *Monody* on the death of the first.

But she had not yet done with Mr Taylor. Four years after the Canon had taken a firm hand with her first suitor she met him in London, again by accident. 'He declared his unceasing affection, and told me that he had returned to England with the hope that an acquisition to his fortune would induce my father to consent to our union.' Anna was completely taken aback; but she pulled herself together and wrote him a letter 'confessing the change in my heart respecting himself'. Nearly thirty years later she received a letter from the lady who had married Mr. Taylor (now a Colonel), from which it appeared that her husband had never ceased to talk of Miss Seward as a paragon of beauty and all the virtues. Becoming a little restive under this treatment, Mrs. Taylor had

obtained Miss Seward's works and from them had imagined the authoress to be, if possible, more marvellous than her husband had said she was. Anna did her best to correct the lady's extravagant estimate of herself, and was unable to account for the Colonel's persistent infatuation. In fact, she firmly believed that Mrs. Taylor had exaggerated the situation until, three months later, the Colonel's mysterious behaviour convinced her to the contrary.

In passing through Lichfield the Colonel called at Anna's house. 'I was dressing. My man-servant brought his card upstairs. While he did that, my housekeeper, coming up the stairs from the kitchen, saw a gentleman whom she did not know, stand at the foot of the next flight of stairs, looking up them with earnest melancholy eyes. Perceiving her, he went back into the hall; and when the man brought my message to request his going into the parlour, and to say that I would be down immediately, lo! he had vanished.' Upon being taxed by his wife on the subject of this visit, the Colonel explained: 'I had no sooner entered the house than I became sensible of my perilous state of feeling, and fled with precipitation.' Anna regretted that he had not stayed for what she believed would have been 'a spell-dissolving interview'.

Her third love-affair was of a different nature from the two just recorded. The leading physician of Lichfield and its neighbourhood was Dr. Erasmus Darwin, who was on terms of close friendship with the Seward family. He had shown a keen interest in Anna's first poetical exercises. 'He became a sort of poetic preceptor to me in my early youth,' she says; 'if I have critical knowledge in my favourite science, I hold myself chiefly indebted for it to him.' Her growing affection for him was the subject of some amusement among their friends, and the fact that he

was already married gave place to the situation. After the death of the doctor¹ in 1756, Anne would doubtless have married him if he had lived for the church, but, though still attentive to her person, he regarded her with a chaste eye and reserved his deeper spiritual intimacies for a mistress. Later the doctor fell in love with a beautiful widow, married her, and left Lichfield, much to Anne's chagrin.

Her last and most important love affair did not become serious until he was about fifty, though it began at a much earlier period. John Seward was, according to her, the most wonderful singer in the world. He was one of the vicars choral of the cathedral, and it was he who taught her to love music, especially the music of Handel. She had known him from her twelfth year—he was eight years her senior—and it was probably due to his humble origin quite as much as to his marriage, which was a failure, that she did not begin to realise the true nature of her feeling for him until she was middle-aged. As we shall see, he became her sole interest in life after the death of her father; but now we must return and travel quickly with her through the years.

A turning-point in her life occurred when she was barely sixteen. Dr. Darwin tried to persuade Canon Seward that his eldest daughter had real poetical talent and should be encouraged to write. Canon Seward did not want Anna to waste her time over verses when she ought to be thinking of marriage, and he questioned her talent. Darwin promptly informed him that his daughter's poems were better than anything he could show. This should have put the Canon on his mettle; but he behaved more like a parent than a poet, forbade Anna to write another line, and ordered her to turn her attention to needlework. In

¹ For a full account of Anna Seward's relationship with Erasmus Darwin, see the present writer's *Doctor Darwin* (1930).

spite of this, life passed pleasantly enough for her; there were dances and musical parties (when Saville sang) and dinners; there were famous visitors, and public celebrations of national events, and lessons on the harpsichord, and trips to Buxton and Matlock, and clothes to be bought, and netted bags to be made, and letters to be written, and, above all, Honora to be taught and displayed and adored. A considerable diversion was also caused by a determined attempt on the part of her parents to marry off their younger daughter, Sarah, to Joseph Porter, Dr. Johnson's stepson. The arrangement was made by correspondence, before Sarah had set eyes on her intended husband. In due course Joseph arrived, a short, pale-faced, round-shouldered, middle-aged, vulgar person. At first he flirted with Anna and ignored Sarah; but he turned up again two days later and proposed marriage to Sarah, who accepted him as in duty bound. The constant sight of him during the next few weeks, however, was too much for Sarah. She fell ill, rallied, relapsed, and died. Joseph instantly turned his attention to Anna, who made short work of him; and he disappeared unceremoniously from history. Anna found solace for the death of her sister in poetry and music, and a little later she was taken completely out of herself by the excitements of a first visit to London.

In 1766 Richard Lovell Edgeworth stayed with Dr. Darwin at Lichfield. Anna liked him at first and much enjoyed his company, little realising that in the years to come she would hate him for insincerity, treachery, and even, in her opinion, murder. He admired her beautiful eyes, her rich auburn hair and her wit. She admired his polish, his looks, his air of breeding, his vivacity. His visit was all too brief. Four years passed by, during which Anna had an accident, which injured her knee and gave her a

permanent limp, and her darling Honora became engaged to a young man named John André, who came of a Genevese family recently settled in England. He was in a London counting-house, but he was ambitious and wanted to join the army. The three of them spent many happy hours in 'the dear blue room'—André called Anna's dressing-room—and when he returned to London Anna, who thoroughly approved the match, became the recipient of his written confidence. Needless to say, Honora's father was averse to an engagement with a man who was poor and had no prospects.

In 1770 Edgeworth returned to Lichfield as the guest of Thomas Day, who had taken a house in Stowe valley in order to be near Dr. Darwin. And now the trouble started. First Edgeworth (who was already married) and finally Day fell in love with Honora Sneyd. Anna strongly disapproved of their proceedings, and did her best to shield Honora from their frank admiration, wishing to reserve her for André. Even the thought of losing Honora to André was painful to her, for by now she was passionately attached to her beautiful pupil, her soul-sister. Many years later she wrote of this period. 'The charms of Honora's society, when her advancing youth gave equality to our connection, made Lichfield an Edenic scene to me, from the year 1766 to 1771.' In March 1771 André got a commission in the army, and Mr. Day, after informing Edgeworth that his passion for the lady was criminal in the circumstances, began to woo Honora. But Honora did not care for Day's ideal of the married state, and rejected his proposal. This left the field clear for Edgeworth, who escaped temptation by taking his wife and family to France. A little later his wife was considerate enough to die, and within five months, to the fury of Anna, he married Honora. It is no exaggeration to say that Anna went

into mourning for Honora from the moment she became engaged to Edgeworth. 'The established habits of my life were broken, and the native gaiety of my spirit eternally eclipsed. . . . No sprightly parties did I promote, or when I could help it, join, through the years 1773 4 5-6.' She never forgave Edgeworth, and when Honora died in 1780 she practically accused him of murdering her, because he allowed her to pursue her domestic duties when in a feeble state of health. 'Eighteen years after the marriage she could still refer to 'the specious, the false, the cruel, the murderous Edgeworth, who cankered first and then crushed to death, the finest of human flowers'.

Honora gone, the daily round lost its savour, the mornings held no promise. But she could still read poetry and listen to the songs of Saville and appreciate the botanical garden that Dr. Darwin planted a mile from Lichfield and join Lady Miller's literary circle at Bath-Easton and write poems. Her *Elegy on Captain Cook* attracted the attention of the lettered world and even won a tribute from Dr. Johnson. In the same year that saw the death of Honora, Anna's mother passed away and André, now a Major, was hanged as a spy during the War of Independence in America. In a transport of indignation Anna sat down and wrote a *Monody on the Death of Major André*, which included a savage attack on Washington. The poem had an immediate success and was quoted everywhere. Two interesting effects of the *Monody* may be noted. A Mr. Seward who was serving with General Eliott (the Hero of Gibraltar) was asked by the General whether he was related to the authoress of that poem. He replied that he had the honour of being distantly related but had never met her. 'It is sufficient, Mr. Seward, that you bear her name, and a fair reputation,' said the General, 'to entitle you to the notice of every soldier who has it in his power to

serve and oblige a military brother. You will always find a cover for you at my table, and I must welcome, and whenever it may be in my power to give you essentially, I shall not want the inclination. Since those days Generals have not cultivated a taste for poetry.

Another result of the poem is still more noteworthy. A few years after peace was declared between England and America, General Webster commissioned an officer to wait upon Mrs. Sewall and assure her, from the General personally, that no circumstance of his life had been so meritorious as to be censured in the *Monody on Andre* as the pitiless author of his ignominious fate, that he had laboured to save him and that he requested her attention to papers on the subject which he had sent by this officer for her perusal. Anna was satisfied with the explanation contained in the papers and realised that she had been unjust to General Washington.

Her *Elegy on Captain Cook* gained her the friendship of William Hayley, who was the most fashionable and popular poet of his time, a man who appealed equally to the *salon* and the street, a sort of Eliot-Kipling. Anna calls him 'the transcendent bard of the present æra'. Hayley came to stay with her for a fortnight, and they fell at one another's feet. Hayley thought she was a handsome edition of Queen Elizabeth, and he was deeply impressed by Saville's singing. But the crowd of callers, including many clergy, had a depressing effect on him and he 'resolved to make a hasty retreat to the dear solitude of Eartham'. Of course Anna returned the visit, and during her stay on the Sussex hills was painted by Romney. Hayley admired Anna and wrote poems on her genius. Anna admired Hayley and wrote poems on his. Mrs. Hayley admired both, but wrote no poems, her chief contribution to the party being 'her singular laugh,

frequent and excessive, past all proportion to its cause'. Altogether it was a happy holiday of highbrows.

In the summer of 1784, following her visit to the Hayleys, she was at Buxton. The weather was unpropitious and she preferred 'umbrageous eminences' to 'high wild hills', but the company was select and she was happy. 'I found a pleasing succession of animated hours in the medley society of that crowded scene,' she says. 'Surrounded by an agreeable and numerous company a disposition, social as mine, felt little disposed to mourn over the inverted seasons. We had much *mental* sunshine; not once, as I recollect, was it overshadowed by tenacious pride, by envy, or by spleen. Thus did cheerfulness, and unanimity, compensate the straightness of our dusky mansion, the inelegance of its board, the unpleasant effluvias which met us on the staircase, and in every passage.' Perhaps it never struck her that these intellectual gluts were not always to the taste of her gentlemen friends, however well-bred; for we find this revealing passage in one of her letters: 'With all his good taste in literature and ladies, he has some unaccountabilities. . . . One of these fancies is the perpetual scampering off from a very agreeable and comfortable home into the neighbouring villages, and there indolently wasting day after day with beings of little congeniality to himself.' She was home again in the autumn of '84 in the scenery she loved best: 'The autumnal glory of this day puts to shame the summer's sullenness. I sit writing upon this clear green terrace, feeding at intervals my little golden-breasted songsters. The embosomed vale of Stowe, which you know it overlooks, glows sunny through the Claud-Lorain-tint, which is spread over the scene, like the blue mist over a plumb.'

At the end of 1784 Dr. Johnson died and Anna Seward began writing about him. Her portrait of him differs from Boswell's. She had seen him, at

regular interval, from her childhood, during his periodic trips to Lichfield. 'I have always', and received visits from Dr. Johnson, 'on every remembrance of his in our town.' He tells us, 'But it is clear that their dissimilar taste in literature was all ended in his disliking her, 'notwithstanding her great talents, and he always expressed her no on his first visitation on returning to Lichfield'. Once he told her that he would hang a dog that read the *Isis* in verse. Anna replied, 'What, then, must be the effect of her opinion, as it by heart, and who often repeated it, as if with a delight that grows by what it fed upon.' 'Die!' growled Johnson, 'in a burst of bad temper. No wonder she thought poorly of his opinion, and he is to be forgiven for assuming that they were dictated by malice, envy and spleen. 'We must rein in our enthusiasms towards those who are not themselves enthusiasts,' she carefully noted, 'but the warm ingenious heart defeat, by its excess, its dearest purposes.'

When Boswell applied to her for anecdotes of Johnson, she sent several and regretted that Mrs. Lucy Porter 'could communicate more than she would take the trouble of doing. . . . I do not believe that a kneeling world would obtain from her the letters you wish for.' Anna could not understand Mrs. Porter's worship of 'the old literary Colossus'. Though she had heard her scolding Johnson like a school-boy for soiling her floor with his shoes, yet the poor soul thought him 'almost next to the Deity in perfection'. One of the anecdotes that she sent was received by Boswell with polite scepticism, though Johnson's mother, a most 'conscientious creature', often told it to Mrs. Porter, 'a woman of the strictest veracity'. This was that Johnson had made some verses at the age of three 'on having killed, by treading upon it, his eleventh duck'.

Boswell visited Anna in the spring of '85 and had several talks with her. Though she admired Johnson's writings she disliked his disposition and did her best to convince Boswell that his hero was envious by nature. 'Mr. Boswell's comment upon this observation was that dissenting shake of the head, to which folk are reduced when they will not be convinced, yet find their stores of defence exhausted.' In the course of their talk Boswell said that Johnson was a Roman Catholic in his heart. 'I have heard him,' said he, 'uniformly defend the cruel executions of that dark bigot, Queen Mary.' Boswell also told her that Johnson 'wished and expected to have married Mrs. Thrale'.

Anna was alternately impressed and irritated by Johnson. She noted his limitations with warmth: 'To Sam Johnson the sweetest airs and most superb harmonies were but unmeaning noise.' Then, too, 'Dr. Johnson was a very indifferent reader of verse. One eternal monotone frustrated the intent of the poet, respecting the echo of sound to sense.' But she noted his good points with keen appreciation. For example, she records how Lucy Porter asked Johnson whether she might trust the reviewers of new publications. 'Infallibly, dear Lucy,' he replied, 'provided you buy what they abuse, and never anything they praise.' Anna wrote several articles on Johnson for the journals of the day and eventually involved herself in an acrimonious correspondence with Boswell, who became extremely offensive and even went so far as to say that 'poetesses . . . have too often been not of the most exemplary lives,' which was probably a dig at her friendship with Saville.

In 1784 Anna's poetical novel *Louisa* was published. It was favourably reviewed by Boswell (this was long before his quarrel with the authoress) and praised by Hayley. But George Hardinge, Attorney-General to

the Queen, criticised her style, which brought this remark from Anna: 'My peace requires that I should not be of your correspondence.' Though *Louisa* ran through five editions, its publication was not a landmark in the history of English poetry.

The years from 1785 till 1790 were agreeably filled up with visits to London, Stratford-on-Avon and other places, Handelian concerts and festivals, and new poetic discoveries. She never faltered in her love of Shakespeare, proving it by frequent misquotations from his works: 'That the bard of Avon is the greatest bard that any age, any country has produced, or ever will produce, I do most firmly believe, and have often thought that I scarcely ever met with a marked character of which, in some of its leading features, the prototype may not be found in Shakespeare.' Yet it is doubtful whether she altogether appreciated a Shakespearean character when she came across one. 'You have a large family,' she said one day to the wife of a labourer. 'Yes, madam; but God be thanked, we have buried a many childer, for all that we ha gotten a ruck on 'em left. I often tells my husband - belike God will be so koind to tak most of these too, and rid our hands o' the care on 'em.' She dismisses this honest soul with 'I cannot say that I admired the woman's untutored philosophy'.

Under Saville's influence Anna's love of Handel grew with the years: 'Were Handel living, I should approach and address him with much more awe than any merely-good sort of body upon the throne of England. People who have themselves no intellectual superiorities may be expected to contend for the idle claims of accidental distinctions.' It was Saville, too, who first drew her attention to the genius of a new poet named William Cowper. 'Scarce an hour has passed since Mr. Saville brought me, with all the triumph of poetic taste in his eyes, what he justly

called an high treat, fresh imported from Aonian bowers. "I have tasted," said he, "just sipt, and found its flavour delicious; if you are not charmed with the opening of this new poem, 'The Task', I shall resign my pretences to know what will please you." He did not have to resign them, for though Anna always objected to the way in which Cowper 'demonised the Deity', yet she became a loyal lover of his muse. Indeed, she never failed to praise her contemporaries when she honestly could: 'What an age of wit and genius is the present! But the world will never be cured of its cant about "weakened nature and exhausted art". Shaftesbury and Addison so canted in *their* period, now called the Augustan: Envy of contemporary claims produces, and will ever produce it. We have plenty of ravens, that fly croaking about, and seek to darken, with their flapping wings, the present golden day.' Nothing, however, could persuade her to praise work that she did not admire. The fact that Mrs. Smith ('The Swan of Bignor') liked her sonnets could not seduce her into liking the sonnets of Mrs. Smith. 'I am an ingenuous creature,' she said; 'as I feel I speak, or I write. . . . Where I have esteemed and loved, I cannot dress my language, either oral or scriptural, in cold civility or feigned kindness.' And again: 'Sincerity is the first duty of friendship; I should blush to commend if I had not courage to confess my disapprobation.'

From 1785 onwards the health of her father was her first consideration. By degrees, from the first stroke, he relapsed into second childhood. We can trace the progress of his dissolution in her letters. 'It has lately, dear friend, been my lot again to suffer pained apprehension from seeing the dart of death shaken furiously over the weak frame of my aged father.' A year later we find her anxiously awaiting the arrival of post-horses at some country inn 'to convey me to the dear

friendship was unfavourably commented upon by the clergy and other God-fearing folk, and once or twice was the cause of some scandal. Bishop Percy referred to Anna's 'very improper attachment to Saville', and there came a time when the Dean and his family 'ceased to visit her'. Anna braved convention and never wavered in her devotion to Saville, combining it openly on all sorts of occasions. 'Often and often,' she told her friend, the Rev. T. S. Whalley, 'but always vainly, have I struggled in the unhappiness of my affliction.' It seems fairly certain that their relationship remained Platonic, and that respectability took its toll of her emotions. Saville was always 'her soul's dearest friend'.

She never recovered from his death on August 2, 1803. For months she did not leave her house, and when at last she could bring herself to converse with her 'herd of acquaintance', her powers of pleasing and of being pleased had quite forsaken her. 'No possibility of anything resembling recompense exists for me on the wide, wide earth, since I can no longer talk with Saville, or find his steps in my mansion and my bowers; since of all the scenes around me, of all my favourite pursuits; of whatever delighted my ear, my eye, and my understanding, his society was the vivifying soul.' On the anniversary of his death ('Strange countenances shall not look upon me that day'), she sat alone watching the hands of the clock, and counting the minutes as they crawled towards the hour of eight, when she could no longer say, 'This hour twelve-month . . . yet, yet he lived in health and hope!' In letter after letter she poured forth her anguish, lamenting 'the now cold heart of the deplored'; and three years after his death we find her exclaiming: 'O! incessant theme of my reflections, cease thou to spread thy dark pall upon these leaves!'

Prior to the death of Saville (whose debts she paid

and whose family she provided for Anna had made the acquaintance of the Ladies of Llangollen. She visited them several times, corresponded with them, and wrote a poem, *Llangollen Vale*, which was attacked and defended in a periodical of the day until the editor said: 'We must dismiss this controversy here.' Some of her other distinguished acquaintances, for her time was now considerable, may briefly be glanced at. She met Hannah More, when staying with her friend Mr. Whalley in the Mendip Hills, but could never feel enthusiastic about such 'flowing votaries of the sacred pipe'. She enjoyed three visits from 'the Christian hero, Mr. Howard', who sat with her for several hours on each occasion 'leading me through scenes of infinite interest to his heart'. One September day in '80 two young ambassadors from the court of Portugal called on her. She read them one of Hayley's poems, 'the tears of delight rushed into their eyes', and they 'requested its recitation', promising her that the fame of the author should be spread along the shores of the Tagus. At Buxton, in the summer of '96, Erskine and Wilberforce frequented her lodgings daily. The celebrated Dr. Parr paid his respects to her while passing through Lichfield. The Master of Trinity, Dr. Mansel, came to quote her poems to her, and 'the proofs he gave of remembering so many passages in them' seemed to her 'to sign their apotheosis'. A close friend was the Rev. H. F. Cary, whose translation of Dante was acknowledged by Anna thus: 'Page 195 is the filthiest horridness I ever met without the limits of this volume, for within it there is yet transcending filthiness. Good heavens! what strange writing will not time sanction! Justly does Shenstone observe, "We pardon, nay, admire, that in an ancient, for which we should execrate a modern poet."' General Elliott (Lord Heathfield) was greeted by Anna on his return to England with an *Ode*. During a

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

triumphal tour throughout the country he visited her, accepted a copy of her collected works and carried it 'in his own hand' through the cheering streets of Lichfield. Southey came, did his best not to laugh while she declaimed several verses she had just written in his praise, and recorded: 'More beautiful eyes I never saw in any human countenance.' And lastly, there was Walter Scott.

Scott had sent her his poems, which she had praised, and a correspondence began which rather alarmed him. In the summer of 1807 he went to see her, was struck by her auburn eyes 'of the precise shade and hue of her hair', by her melodious voice, and by her tasteful and expressive method of recitation. He liked her so much and found her so interesting that, though he came for a few hours, he stayed two days. The liking was mutual. 'Everybody that looks benevolent and says nothing ill-natured interests me,' she once said. Scott looked benevolent and said nothing ill-natured. The only point in his disfavour was that 'like Johnson, his recitation is too monotonous and violent to do justice either to his own writings or that of others'. After her death Scott wrote an epitaph for her tomb in Lichfield Cathedral and edited three volumes of her poetry, 'most of which', he confided in a friend, 'is absolutely execrable'.

In the later part of her life she paid many visits to watering-places like Buxton, Matlock, Harrogate and Hoylake. She also visited her native village Eyam and wept at the childhood memories it evoked. Hoylake, where she once enjoyed 'nineteen oceanic immersions', inspired a poem. When at home she walked two miles a day, either in or out of doors, lightening the labour by reciting poetry whenever forced to perambulate the Palace corridors, thus exercising both limbs and lungs. She took a keen interest in her pictures, complaining that the portrait of one of her

ancestors by Sir Peter Lely 'should have been exposed, through want of care, to the cankering tooth of time and domiciliary dilapidation'. She wrote sermons which drew the tears of the congregations, and composed songs - one of which, about 'a cold and mountainous country in winter', repeated twenty times a day, enabled a lady to endure a particularly sultry season in Lisbon. Anna was especially welcomed by friends who craved tearful sympathy. 'Perhaps I may have imagination,' she once wrote of herself, 'but humour is not the growth of my brain.' A passage from one of her letters tells us much: 'Be assured I long to see you all again; and that to mingle my sighs with yours more increases that longing than could any prospect of participated amusement.'

But in addition to a constantly heaving bosom, she possessed a fairly steady brain. She instantly recognised the genius of Burns and Scott. She made Johnson angry by championing the claims of Chatterton, Milton and Gray. She maintained her high opinion of Cowper against the strictures of Dr. Darwin. Within limitations she liked Wordsworth, and though the present age might think she overpraised Southey, Mason and Hayley, we should appreciate her tribute to Coleridge. She referred to the trial of Warren Hastings as 'the Pageant of mock justice in Westminster Hall'; and sprinkled over the pages of her letters are such evidences of common sense as 'Fanatics have almost always cold hearts', and 'If an uncelebrated Shakespeare were to descend amongst us, the generality would not know him from a Quarles or a Bunyan', and 'It is the English mania to prefer the productions of foreigners to those of our own country', and 'Unpublished and unheard of compositions are the tests of the taste and judgment of the listener'. Her last years were spoilt by ill-health. She had taken as companion a lady who, she was satisfied,

would never desert her because a 'centaneous eruption' had wrecked her beauty and rendered marriage improbable. This lady freed Anne from household duties and enabled her to concentrate on the production of her 'centenary of sonnet' for the press. 'Every moment of my scanty leisure is phylactery I leave the morning pillow,' she wrote to a friend, though it was no longer possible, after Swille's death, to compose 'I press my pillow at midnight in ebony ebony.' From childhood she had been frightened by thunderstorms and the year brought her no tranquillity in the face of 'an inflamed and pealing horizon.' Several accidents, among others a fall down a flight of steps, added to her infirmities. These he termed 'the chastisements of Heaven'. But she seldom suffered from what she called 'abstinence from the pen', and, at the end of her life, the words she used to describe someone else's condition can aptly be applied to herself: 'The intellectual torch wavered not, neither dimmed in its earthly socket.'

She died on March 25, 1809, and because her life had once been so happy she may not have been sorry to go. Many years before she had written 'The drowsy hour has stolen upon me—my eyes are heavy—so is my heart, at times, when I think of friends whom I might search for in vain over this island, of no narrow bounds.'

THE LETTERS OF ANNA SEWARD

Lichfield, Feb. 1763.

It is true I dwell on classic ground. Within the walls which my father's family inhabits, in this very dining-room, the munificent Mr. Walmesley, with the taste, the learning and the liberality of Maecenas, administered to rising genius the kind nutriment of attention and praise. Often to his hospitable board were the school-boys, David Garrick and Samuel Johnson, summoned. The parents of the former were of Mr. Walmesley's acquaintance; but those of the latter did not move in his sphere.

It was rumoured that my mother's father, Mr. Hunter, had a boy of marked ability upon his forms. The huge, over-grown, mis-shapen, and probably dirty stripling was brought before the most able scholar and the finest gentleman in Lichfield or its environs, who, perceiving far more ability than even rumour had promised, placed him at his table, not merely to gratify a transient curiosity, but to assure him of a constant welcome.

Two or three evenings every week Mr. Walmesley called the stupendous stripling and his livelier companion, David Garrick, who was a few years younger, to his own plentiful board. There, in the hours of convivial gaiety, did he delight to waive every restraint of superiority formed by rank, affluence, polished manners and the dignity of advanced life; and there, 'as man to man, as friend to friend', he drew forth the different powers of each expanding spirit, by the vivid interchange of sentiment and opinion, and by the cheering influence of generous applause.

Another circumstance combined to heighten the merit of this patronage. Mr. Walmesley was a zealous Whig. My grandfather, then master of the free school, perceiving Johnson's abilities, had, to his own honour, taken as much pains with him as with the young gentlemen whose parents paid an high price for their pupilage; but my grandfather was a Jacobite, and Sam. Johnson had imbibed his master's absurd zeal for the forfeit rights of the house of Stuart; and this, though his father had very loyal principles; but the anxiety attendant on penurious circumstances, probably left old Johnson little leisure or inclination to talk on political subjects.

His son, I am told, even at that early period of life, maintained his opinions, on every subject, with the same sturdy, dogmatical and arrogant fierceness with which he now overbears all opposition to them in company.

At present we can well conceive the probability of his dogmatism being patiently supported by attending admirers, awed by the literary eminence on which he stands. But how great must have been Mr. Walmesley's love of genius; how great his generous respect for its dependent situation, that could so far restrain a naturally impetuous temper, as to induce him to suffer insolent sallies from the son of an indigent bookseller,

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

and on a subject which, so handled by people of his own rank, he would have dashed back in their faces with no small degree of asperity! . . .

. . . My epistle grows long. You were, however, snatched from the mazes through which the pleasure of talking about myself might have led you, by my pen having started back into brighter and more interesting scenes; scenes that once passing beneath this roof, have stamped a local distinction upon the palace of the Bishop of Lichfield, beyond the power of the crozier or the mitre to bestow.

Lichfield, Feb. 1763.

. . . I do not attempt to send you news, since neither love nor marriage, novel property, or recent misfortune, have produced any change since I wrote to you last, in the situation or sentiments of those who interest you in our little city: and it is time to bid you adieu. My sister has brought my work-bag, with her own, downstairs for the evening. My father and mother are gone out to a card-party. The curtains are dropt, and the chill white world shut out. The candles shine cheerily, and the fire burns bright in the clean hearth. Little Honora draws her chair to the table as I write, Hawksworth's *Almorán and Hamlet* open in her hand. What a beautiful story! How sublime its moral! Honora looks at me, her eyes sparkling with intellectual avidity. - The young mind must not be deprived of its evening nutriment.

Lichfield, April 1764.

At last he is here - this brother elect! - We had heard of his being arrived in London a week before; but he fixed not with his sister the period at which she would see him, mentioning business that might detain him more than a fortnight.

My mother had engaged half Lichfield to play at

cards with her on Wednesday se'nnight. About one o'clock that day, Mrs. Porter sent to inform us, that her brother was that instant arrived, and would accompany her hither to tea. She was one of the party engaged here, so neither of them could be ignorant that, upon this plan, the first interview must be witnessed by twenty pair of curious eyes. But it was not for us to make that an objection. Unluckily, Mrs. Porter's recommendation had transpired, and was become a card-table theme. Nothing can be a secret if my father is to know it, so frank are his communications. We had been unpleasantly conscious of this publicity.

On the message being delivered, sweet Sarah's serenity became considerably discomposed during a few minutes. 'Some natural tears she dropt'; but soon smiled them away. The elements seemed in unison with her feelings; for the sun was just then looking mildly through one of those vernal showers in which the present April has been so rich. Look, love, said I, that calm and gilded rain promises flowers and fruits in abundance; may those kindred tears prepare thy mind as that shower prepares the earth, for the flowers and fruits of wedded happiness!

I stood by her toilet while she dressed. It was with no particular attention. If she was longer about that operation than usual, it was from absence, not from solicitude. She sighed often; and once or twice exclaimed, 'Ah! Heaven!' in a pensive and languid tone, and with an emphatic shake of the head, as she put on her light hat and ribbands.

'Bless me!' said I, 'one would think thou wert adorning a victim, and not a mistress. If that idea has passed across thy mind, prithee, put a stop to this business at once! Study a pretty harangue of dismissal, full of esteem, wayward heart, and so forth.'

Behold us then in the drawing-room. Everybody

arrived, except the most interesting among the guests. A loud rap at the hall door!—A deep crimson spread over my Sarah's cheek, not generally crimson.

‘That cheek, a stranger to the rose,
That best in ruddy milk-maid glow,
The counterblow open there
With all that’s soft and all that’s true!’

Restrained smile pursed up the face of many a warring virgin of the company, till I looked like a thin pikelet, half-toasted.

The drawing-room door opened, and in walked, in all the pomp of blue and white tulle and Brussels lace, and with the most satisfied air, our honest friend, Mrs. Porter, led by the intended—a thin, pale personage, somewhat below the middle height, with rather too much stoop in the shoulders, and a little more withered by the Italian suns than are our English bachelors after an elapse of only forty years, in a black velvet coat, and a waistcoat richly embroidered with coloured flowers upon gold tissue; a bay wig, in crimp buckle, powdered white as the new-shorn fleece.

An unfortunate idea of a mountebank doctor, produced by the black velvet coat and gold waistcoat, gave me some difficulty in managing my risible muscles.

Mr. Porter’s features are not irregular, his teeth very fine, though in a mouth which, being rather concave than convex, seldom shews them, and he looks extremely clean. The great desideratum, perceived at first view, is the air of a gentleman, which I have often seen liberally and gracefully diffused about some of our English merchants. It was here in vain to look for it; neither did the tone of his voice, in speaking, please me. These are, in my estimation, most important personalities; mind having so much to do in producing the one, and in harmonising the other.

You know the Lichfield young women do not play at cards. Six or seven of us were loitering at the windows and round the card-tables - expectation too busy with us for us to be busy with our needle. The beau was presented by his sister to every one in turn, and judiciously made no particular address to my sister. He said, gallantly enough, that he had pleasure in seeing his native country the richest in beauty of any nation through whose cities he had passed.

Our glowing Nannette was there, with her large and languishing hazle eyes, warm cheek, and the tender fascination of her smile. Eliza W., in all her aquiline beauty and with that air of grandeur, though hardly yet sixteen, whose form so often reminds me of a passage in Ossian, 'Lovely, with her raven hair, is the white-bosomed daughter of Sorglan.' She also, whose charms are in their summer-ripeness, whose name seems to have been prophetic of her seldom-equalled beauty, the celebrated Helen White; yet has her cast of countenance more of Raphael's Madonna, than of that less-chastened loveliness with which imagination invests the faithless wife of Menelaus.

Miss A. - also was in the group; of shape correct, and of air sprightly, with my sister, the fair bride-elect, whose form is so light and elegant, whose countenance has so much modest intelligence, and by her side Honora, 'fresh and beautiful as the young day-star when he bathes his fair beams in the dews of spring'. Often, when Mr. Porter's attention was otherwise engaged, she looked up in my sister's face with eyes moistened by solicitous tenderness.

This dear child will not live; I am perpetually fearing it, notwithstanding the clear health which crimsones her cheek and glitters in her eyes. Such an early expansion of intelligence and sensibility partakes too much of the angelic, too little of the mortal nature, to tarry long in these low abodes of frailty and of pain,

where the harshness of authority, and the impracticability of schisims, with the worst in chief of pride and envy, so frequently operate by their storm, and chill by their damps, the more innocent and purer spirits scattered, not profaned, over the earth.

'This child seem angel-bred, but how can you so how communicate shall she be if he be a woman before she is actually angel?' What a beautiful question to me from the conceit of me that I might have been instrumental in the cultivation of talents and of virtue, in which the propagation, the communicability, and warmth of every provoking propensity, which are, I flatter myself characteristic of our mistress, shall be united with the sweetness, the unerring discretion, and self-command of the other! She will, by all those who know how to appreciate excellence, be acknowledged, like Miranda, 'to have been formed of every creature's best'.

But how I have wandered from a subject certainly more important to me at present even than all the (perhaps) flattering promises which the future makes in the glance, the tear, the smile of my Honora! Yet it is one thing to be important to one's feelings, and another to bear them away on the light wings of heart-expanding Hope. But descend, thou excessive pen, from these visionary altitudes, upon the firm, though not flowery ground of this projected marriage!

After tea Mr. Porter talked and attended chiefly to me. Declining cards, and my father and mother engaged in them, it became a duty of politeness to shew attention to some of the family he came to visit. It must have distressed my sister to have been singled out for this purpose. Yet so prone are folk to gather opinions as they gather flowers, from the surface, instead of implanting them in their minds, by taking them up from the roots, that I saw in the half-suppressed, but significant smiles of our guests, that they

thought the elder sister likely to bear away the Hymeneal wreath from the nadder brow of the appointed fair one.

Our party broke up at nine. Mr. and Mrs. Porter supped, by engagement, with their relation, Mr. White. A few of my mother's intimates, with our beauteous Helen, staid supper here. The instant the brother and sister were decamped, everybody spoke at once, and all in jocular invective upon your poor friend's mischievous eyes, as they called them.

Sarah, smiling, claimed of me the promise I had asked of her, viz., that she might accompany me into Italy. She claimed it with a rising blush, and a tremulous motion in the eyelid, visible only to my searching glance, 'which knows each line and trick of her sweet countenance'; but to that glance it discovered a little latent chagrin, so natural to the delicacy of virgin-pride.

Ah! sweet one, thought I, thou wilt never go into Italy under the Porter auspices if thou goest not a principal of the party. However, you may be sure no such premature and needless assertion escaped my lip: yet, vexed at an undiscerning idea of such apparently general influence, I warmly declaimed upon its absurdity.

Honora gazed upon me while I was speaking, with eyes which bore animated assent to my protest, and then turned them, with a smile of scorn, upon the group, who were interrupting me with laughing but earnest and clamorous dissention. Throwing my arms round Honora's neck and kissing her, I exclaimed, 'Here is this child looking down upon you all as the idlest dupes existing, to a style of behaviour which, being otherwise, the man must have had too coarse a mind for the endurance of a woman of delicacy.' Helen vowed she would find it all out at her Uncle W—'s. We shall know, added she, what our Italian

prince thinks of these rival sisters. "Rival!" I could have beat her.

Conceive this provoking Helen, in line in a, we were at breakfast the en unived, her fine face all in a glow, her hand spread "It is verily, and even so!" this irresistible madame Anne! Sarah must wear the willow, but I think it will not be with a very aching heart! "No, indeed!" said the sweet maid with a look of blended, or rather in tant uncedly changing emotion, the result of which was ineffable. It was a gleam of disdain, immediately softening into the most affectionate sweetness, as her eyes remained fixed on me.

I asked Helen on what grounds he built her mighty probable conclusion. "My uncle W.," replied she, "told me he had asked Mr. Porter how he liked Mr. and Mrs. Seward?" "Extremely." "And Miss Seward?" "I think her charming." And Helen ran on in a string of hyperbole which I have no inclination to repeat. "The youngest." "She seems a modest, pleasing young woman."

"Now, for all this," cried out Honora, "I don't believe he likes Nancy best." I called her wiser than the aged, and grew so saucy to my mother, that she looked grave, and took her pinch of snuff first at one nostril and then at the other, with swift and angry energy, and her eyes began to grow dark and to flash. "It is an odd peculiarity; but the balls of my mother's eyes change from brown into black when she feels either indignation or bodily pain."

Reports of this imaginary preference of the eldest sister spread rapidly through our little city; and before night it was asserted that he had made proposals in form to Miss Seward.

Messages of inquiry concerning our healths only passed between us and the Porters through the course of that day; but at eleven the next morning the

brother and sister called upon us to go with them to Mrs. Porter's new house, just built, but not yet inhabited. He looked much better; the mountebank had vanished with the black velvet. Helen joined our party. Mr. Porter's whole attentions were devoted to Sarah; and Honora and I exulted not a little over Helen about her prediction. He took an opportunity of frankly offering his hand and heart to her acceptance, ere we reached home, where he passed the remainder of the day with us.

The general misconstruction of his civility to me had been much in his favour. Hence maiden-pride was busy with its whisper, that now rejection on her part would be deemed dislike on his, and preference of another. So this circumstance acted as a powerful counterpoise to the quack-doctor impression given by the black velvet and fine waistcoat, which I had not been able to forbear imparting to her. She owned her heart had recoiled a little from the unusual *tout-ensemble* produced by those habiliments. How much better did he look in his brown coat!

Behold him an accepted lover! and a very pressing one. He wants to hurry the nuptials, saying he must be in Italy before winter. I am afraid I see about him an impolite impatience of contradiction; a proud, not an enamoured jealousy, and a considerable degree of peevishness. Heaven protect my sweet Sarah's peace!

When people are tolerably happy, how dangerous is a material change in the habits of life! Ah! what halcyon days have this dear girl and I passed with our little Honora, beneath the fair spires of tranquil Lichfield! How immaterial were the clouds of an horizon so azure! Some violence of temper, and vapourish despondency, from causes provokingly trivial, on my mother's part, some absurdities on my father's; yet, left so much to ourselves, and perfectly aware of the

which he did willingly and earnestly; and since, on some alarming appearances of a fiefiful and despotic disposition, they have warmly and solemnly adjured her to break off the affair. But alas! she is become attached and partial to him in the extreme.

By this generous adjuration our parents have proved themselves really parents, making their child's happiness their first object. Whenever it is otherwise, a miserable proof is exhibited of human depravity.

Adieu! adieu! This Hyemencal gale begins to blow cold and ungenial upon my once warm hopes, and 'all their fires grow pale'.

Lichfield, June 2, 1764.

O! my kind friend, this dear creature is dangerously ill! A violent fever! Thursday next was fixed for her marriage. About three o'clock yesterday morning I was awakened by her taking my hand and telling me that she was very ill. Her dear hands felt of a parching heat, and so did her forehead and temples.

I called assistance instantly. We are all very much alarmed. Medicine has hitherto unsuccessfully contended with the disease, which I am afraid gains ground instead of abating. Her spirits have been too much hurried for a constitution so delicate. Yet her youth! I must hope, for O! I cannot endure the thoughts of her being torn from us!

We are a sad, sad family – distracted with fears that we dare not communicate to each other. I will not while any hope remains send away this letter; that, if it please Heaven to restore the dear sufferer, you may be spared those grievous apprehensions which your sympathy will excite, should you know our situation before you are informed that its terrors are removed.

Thursday Morning. – Congratulate me, dearest Emma! – the intended bridal-day has arisen auspiciously, averting from my Sally's bosom the arrows of

death, whose aim has been deprecated with our prayers and tears. There is a remission in this cruel fever; – a balmy moisture upon her temples, bosom, and hands. She breathes freely; is able to sit up in an arm-chair; to smile with her wonted serenity, and cheerfully to tell us that she shall soon be well.

Parched and exhausted as I was with weeping and watching through four days and nights, hope has proved a restoring cordial. I leave you that I may refresh myself by combing my dishevelled hair and washing from my eyelids the traces of those bitter tears.

Thursday Night. O! my friend, our hopes are vanished! While I was changing my gown and preparing to carry neatness and a cheerful countenance to my dear sister's arm-chair, she relapsed; the fever came back with redoubled violence!

In the distraction with which the servants fled different ways to recall the medical people, there was no thought of me. Nobody came near my apartment to reveal the sad tidings, and I entered the sick room with all the alacrity of hope. What did I behold there? – Alas! my precious sister sunk back in her bed just recovering from a fainting fit! sweet Honora supporting with her arm the dear sufferer's head, her silent tears falling in large drops upon her Sally's pillow; my father and mother standing by the bedside, the deepest woe in their countenance. Mr. Porter sitting in the window leaning upon his hand, which covered his forehead.

The dear creature opened her languid eyes and, looking at me earnestly, 'My Nancy, you are dressed – are you going out? – do not leave me long.' 'Alas, no! there was no thought of going out. I left you, my love, to put on clean clothes that I might look comfortable to you, flattering myself that you were greatly better! nobody came to tell me that you were not so well again.'

She sighed and waved her dear hand emphatically, as if she had said – The days of our happiness here are passed away!

Saturday Morning. – Ah! she has grown worse and worse, though by slow degrees. Dr. D. says, when the fever returned, it was with a fatal change in its nature from inflammatory to putrid, and that he has very little hope of saving her, O! my friend, may your heart never feel the anguish with which mine is at this instant torn!

How much would Mr. Porter be to be pitied if he had strong sensibilities! – so near calling such a blessing his, and to have it thus torn from him! but his sensations seem more like vexation than grief.

My father's sanguine and cheerful disposition will not suffer him to think his darling so ill as she too surely is. My mother, my poor mother! – she has heard that a clergyman in Worcestershire, of the name of Bayley, has frequently administered James' Powder with success in very dangerous cases.

She has just sent a chaise and four full speed to conjure him to return hither in it on an errand of life or death. We have all eagerly caught at this possibility, and are flattering ourselves with hopes which, I fear, are but as the straws at which drowning wretches catch. Is it likely that a private gentleman should know a better method of administering that medicine than a physician of D.'s acknowledged skill?

Sunday. – Mr. Bayley is come; he arrived at ten this morning. The instant he came into the room my mother rushed to him and, falling on her knees, clasped her arms wildly around him, exclaiming, in the piercing accent of anguish, 'Dear angel-man, save my child!'

He burst into floods of humane tears as he raised her from the ground. They went instantly into the sick

chamber - but O! he gives n^o more hope than Dr D. If the fever had but continued inflammatory! - but here all evacuation is pernicious. He joins the doctor in advising muck medicines instead of the powders. Adieu! adieu!

Wednesday Morning. I have hardly strength to tell you - it is pronounced, she cannot survive this night; there is no balm in Gilead! Pray for us that we may be supported under the severe chastisement of Almighty power!

Gotham, Nottinghamshire, June 23, 1764.

I have sat almost an hour at the writing-table, my hands crossed upon this paper, unable to take up the pen; that pen which I used to seize with such glad alacrity when it was to convey my thoughts to you! Now spiritless, afflicted, weary, my mind presents only scenes of mournful recollection; or, hovering over the silent and untimely grave of my sister, perceives nothing but a drear vacancy.

Your last letter came to me when my heart laboured under one of the keenest paroxysms of its late anguish. The funeral bell was tolling and the dear, dear remains were everlastingly passing away from our habitation. Six of her young companions, in white raiment, the emblem of her purity, drowned in tears, bore, with trembling hands, the pall that covered that dim form, which, but a little, little fortnight before, had walked amidst them with the light step of youth and gaiety. Yes, upon the very lawn over which they were then slowly walking in grieved and awful silence, interrupted only by the solemn death-bell.

Thus vanish our hopes! - thus cold is the bridal-bed of my dear sister! No sunbeam shall pierce its dark recess 'till the last morn appear'.

In a few days after this sad scene was closed, we came hither to the village-retirement of my excellent

uncle and aunt, Martin. Pious tranquillity broods over the kind and hospitable mansion, and the balms of sympathy and the cordials of devotion, are here poured into our torn hearts.

At times I can scarce persuade myself that I shall see her no more! – for O! how perfect was our amity! Upon that tender, instinctive affection, which grew with our growth, was engrafted esteem the most established, and confidence the most entire. One bed! one heart! one soul! Even the difference of our dispositions became a cement to our friendship; her gentleness tempered my impetuosity; her natural composure caught animation from her sister's sprightliness; – 'our studies, our amusements, our taste the same'. O heavy, heavy loss! yet bow thy stubborn grief, O my spirit! and remember the reason thou hadst to fear for her happiness in that union, from which she was so awfully snatched away.

Cut off as she was in the bloom of life, yet nothing could be more resigned. Sickness, pain and the extremest bodily weakness, had not power to extinguish, or even to abate, the pure flame of her devotion; yet all was calm and rational, for she had no delirium through the course of her illness. When her eyes were closed to open no more; when she seemed insensible to outward objects, she continued fervent in prayer, nay, in thanksgiving to her God. She repeated the Lord's prayer often, and several verses out of the Scriptures which were applicable to her expiring situation. In these repetitions her voice, though low, and interrupted by the pausings of weakness, was distinct. I am sure she had a foretaste of the everlasting happiness which was soon to recompence, ten thousand fold, the mortal struggle.

She expressed unwillingness to take the musk medicines, which, I am afraid, were disagreeable to her. Yet when my father and mother solicited, she opened

her mouth and swallowed them, without shewing any more reluctance.

Her partial affection for me was almost the latest yearning of her gentle spirit. As I sat by her weeping, the morning of the final day, and saw her lie pale and stretched out, her sweet eyes unable to open, she said in a low voice, when we had all thought her invisible to every earthly recollection, 'Speak, my Nancy; let me once more hear that dear voice, ever welcome to me.'

O! how those words yet vibrate on my ear! I repeat them to myself many times in every day and night, endeavouring to imitate the sweet mournful accent in which they fell upon my soul with indelible impression.

My father was agonized by the loss of this, the darling of his heart, but it is amazing how soon the native cheerfulness of his temper has arisen from beneath the blow. My mother, at first, bore it better. She directed the funeral; and the business which it created seemed to have rendered her spirits collected, and to have dried the source of her tears; but, when that was over, a deep severe dejection succeeded, which nothing seems of power to comfort or to cheer.

My cousin, Miss Martin, is of my sister's age, and was deservedly beloved by her above all her other companions, next to myself and Honora. She grieves for our loss and her own with passionate tenderness.

Honora, young as she is, has shared all my sorrow. If she is but spared me, I shall not be quite bereaved. It will not be wholly in vain that I shall say, Return, blest days! Adieu! adieu!

Gotham, Nottinghamshire, June 27, 1764.

With what kind anxiety do you inquire of me if our sorrows soften? Mine do soften, my dear creature; participation has been their balm.

Upon a pleasant grass-plat, in my uncle's garden, stands a fine old mulberry tree, of extensive and luxuriant shade, beneath which we all used to sit, reading and working, in the happy days that are flown.

There is an austerity in my mother's grief which, in a great measure, keeps us silent in her presence. We see my father cheerful, and fear to open afresh the wound of his heart, by even alluding to anything which must recall the image of her he has lost. So, in these summer heats, we hasten to the mulberry shade. It is there that her name is ever on our lips. We recollect her looks, her voice, her gesture, her sentiments. We search for the passages in our poets of which she was most enamoured, and her accents return upon our ear as we read them; and thus do we extract the bitterness with which unpartaken sorrow broods over the laceration of its tenderest ties.

How comfortable is it that we can pass many hours of every day exempt from the intermixture of society with indifferent people, who would soon be tired of this eternal looking-back to the past and recalling the image of the everlasting absent! They would fancy it right to force our thoughts into other channels. Mistaken idea! which yet, against experience, maintains its ground.

We are never weary of our heart-affecting theme, equally interesting to all the three. It in some measure restores to us the angelic friend we have lost. She seems yet to mix in our conversations. We take delight in assuring ourselves that her spirit hovers round us, and receives a part of its happiness from the consciousness how tenderly she is yet beloved, how incessantly remembered by those who were dearest to her on earth. Ah! I hope they will one day be reunited to her in a state, the felicity of which will have its completion in the conviction of its permanence!

Early next week I shall accompany my father to

Eyam, his living in Derbyshire. During the last of our residence there, Mr. Porter means to join us, whom we left behind with his sister. After he has passed some days with us there, we shall all re-assemble at Lichfield. Changed Lichfield! Ah! how miserably changed! With what different sensations, to what I used to feel, shall I catch the first glimpse of its spires from the neighbouring hills! those spires, never till then, after absence, beheld with less than rapture.

But as to Derbyshire, I shall feel a mountain sweetness in returning to the mountain-heights of that village, in whose bosom my sister and myself first saw light, and where we sported away the hours of infancy, till I was six, she five, years old, and which we have re-visited together of late years, passing frequently some of the summer months in that romantic retreat.

Much, however, shall I lose in not having Honora with me, whom my mother cannot spare, since my father has no gratification in recalling the past, in 'overtaking the wings of Time', and in bringing back, arrayed in all the softening hues of recollection,

'. . . the hours, the days,
The years that saw us happy.'

I am afraid that men in general feel little of all this. Ah! rather than my destiny should ever be united to one whose spirit is proof against these pensive luxuries, may I never change the name my Sally bore! lest the habit of suppressing sensibilities which cannot be partaken, change the nature of that heart, on whose softness her image, and the remembrance of her virtues, is so deeply impressed, and to which you are unalienably dear.

Lichfield, Aug. 1764.

How strange is it that I returned to Lichfield a whole month ago, and have not written to you in the interim;

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

not even acknowledged one of the kindest and dearest of your letters! Alas! my averseness to take up the pen yet remains undiminished.

You express a desire to know how we bore the tearing-open, as you emphatically call it, of our recent wound, by a re-entrance beneath this roof, over which the shadows of death had so lately brooded. We were all of us deeply, my mother terribly affected.

‘In vain I looked around
O’er all the well-known ground,
My Sally’s wonted footsteps to descry!
Where oft we used to walk,
Where oft, in tender talk,
We saw the summer sun go down the sky;
Nor by yon fountain’s side,
Nor where its waters glide
Along the valley, can she now be found;
O’er all the pleasing prospect’s verdant bound
No more my mournful eye
Can aught of her espy,
But the sad sacred earth, where her dear
relics lie.’

Those charming lines of Lord Lyttleton’s are as a mirror, in which you will see reflected the feelings of your Anna’s heart on returning to the mansion of her youth and happiness; yet you needed it not; your heart would suggest, your sensibility paint them.

But the pleasure of seeing my Honora again, of weeping upon her neck, and of mingling our tears, was, and yet remains, a great and increasing consolation.

It was an extreme effort of resolution to resume my apartment – the scene, during many years, of pleasing hopes and perfect confidence; during thirteen succeeding days and nights, the scene of dread suspense;

of the struggles of improbable hope against despair; of parental anguish; of fond compassion, torturing because unavailing; of blasted expectation; of expiring loveliness!

Immediately on my arrival, I desired my mother to allot me some other room, for I should never, I said, be able to inhabit that again. She observed it was a charming apartment and, consisting of three rooms, was very convenient for my employment; that it would be better if I could teach my heart to find satisfaction in seeing Honora occupy what once was Sally's dressing-room. I perceived the justice of the remark, and felt a foretaste of the consolation which would result from that last circumstance.

The dear girl, who was present, said, with a tender smile, 'It may be melancholy, but it will not be lonely; and surely the sooner you get over the first shock of re-entering that apartment the better; let us go to the room your sister loved!'

Ah! exclaimed I, and wept, but it must be immediately then; long preparation and reflection will but increase my reluctance.

We went upstairs; I hurried through the passage, moulding in the throes of anguish, Honora's arm, on which I leaned. On opening the door, the bed! the chairs! the bureau! the dressing-table! every separate piece of furniture seemed to bear the stamp and image of her we have lost.

We sat down, and wept during some time in passionate silence. Honora then led me to the window, and made me observe how beautifully the setting sun had gilded those spires, whose illumination our departed friend used to contemplate with delight. She pointed out to me from those windows every pleasing object that my sister used to observe, and said, 'We will love them more than ever for her sake.'

At that instant I felt that in this apartment, of all

other places, I should be most contented, most consoled.

Honora proposed requesting my mother's permission, as she had her friend Miss Hammond with her, that we might sup where we were, without quitting the room for an instant till the next morning.

With what an insight into the human passions is this dear creature born! All that others gain from experience seems hers by intuition.

I enclose an elegy which I wrote upon the late sad event, in the course of a few days after my return home. Most part of it was composed upon that pleasant terrace where we used to read and work on the calm summer days.

Gotham, Aug. 1767.

I write to you from the retired, and yet cheerful mansion of piety and peace, where our family have been in the habit of passing a month every two years; except my father, who contrives to be at some water-drinking place for his health, though generally so excellent, while the rest of us inhabit this scene, much too quiet and uniform for his lively spirits and social taste.

For myself, though truly I should never have chosen to quit Lichfield for Gotham, yet, when duty leads me thither, I can support its tranquillity without *ennui*. Here none come who are anxiously expected – none go away, for whom our sighs are responsive to the closing door. This is not the Abyssinian Hill – but it is the dear retreat which sheltered and soothed my desolation, when death had robbed me of an only sister, and when the wounds of that fatal stroke were all bleeding fresh.

The convenient old parsonage is uncommonly light and cheerful. Its fire-places have odd little extra windows near them, which are the blessings of employment

in cold or gloomy days. A rural garden encircles the house. In its front, a short flagged walk divides two grass-plats, and leads to a little wicket-gate, arched over with ivy, that opens into the fold-yard. A narrow gravel walk extends along the front of the house, and under the parlour windows. Opposite them, and upon the latter grass-plot, stands that venerable and expansive mulberry tree, which shaded us from the summer heat, when, in the hours of sorrow, my cousin, Mrs. Martin Honora, and myself, resorted thither to indulge our mournful recollections. Every other visit we have, through life, paid to this quiet scene, was, as it is now, in autumn.

Behind the house lies the kitchen garden, and across it a pebbly path which leads into the church-yard. Ah! what a difference between our stately cathedral and this simple edifice!

'The plainest roof that Piety could raise,
And only vocal with its Maker's praise!'

When the tuneless bell calls us to Sunday's service, what a contrast, in these rude and moss-greened walls, to the long and vaulted aisles—the pealing organ—the beautiful and full-voiced choir, and all the soul-exalting enthusiasm which results to a lover of music from choral devotion and Gothic magnificence!

But here the religious heart pours forth its unassisted devotion in the plain pews, and at the rustic altar, surrounded by humble villagers; their only finery the crowded posey, whose pinks and roses, mixed with flowering thyme and southernwood, are twisted closely round by a plenitude of packthread, and diffuse a fragrance more cheering and grateful to my sense than the cambric handkerchiefs of fashionable ladies, sprinkled with costly essence and perfumed water.

Nothing can be more uniform, more simple, than the manner in which we pass our time; and in which week after week glides smoothly, yet swiftly, away, and seems, on retrospect, to have been scarce so many days. This is from the want of various faces, varied employments, and of incidents, to mark the progress of time, and divide one day from another on the memory.

We rise at seven. At eight my aunt and cousin, my mother, Honora, and myself, meet at our neat and cheerful breakfast. That dear, kind-hearted saint, my uncle, has his milk earlier, and retires, for the morning, to his study. At nine we adjourn to my aunt's apartment above stairs, where one reads aloud to the rest, who are at work. At twelve my uncle summons us to prayers in the parlour. When they are over, the family disperses, and we young ones either walk or write till dinner. That appears at two. At four we resume my aunt's apartment. Its large and lightsome window commands, it is true, no other prospect than the church-yard over the garden wall, and the village below, which is broad and grassy, with houses thinly scattered. Now, in the latter end of August, the evening spectacle, from seven to eight, is truly pleasing and joyous. A majestic old elm stands in the middle of the green-sward, circled round by a mossy seat, and is the rendezvous of the village youths and maidens, when the labours of the day are past. Some of the young men wrestle; some play at quoits; and others sit on the bench, and talk to the lasses. It is impossible to express the satisfaction I have in beholding these natural and innocent pleasures, —

‘Scene of athletic sports and whisper’d vows.’

When we quit this dear apartment, to take an evening walk, it is always with a degree of reluctance, even

when the sun shone—shone on the little dark wood, a mile from it, and on Welton Hill, which overlooks a rich valley, watered by the fine old silver Trent and crowned by the tower of Nottingham and its stately spire. To the hill when we can prevail on ourselves to quit our book, and the sight of the eternal lovers, we generally went to accept the local attractions of our traditional Cuckoo-bush-hill, a really pleasant way, through a narrow path, over a large ploughed field, to a clump of trees on the east of Bonorap hill, and which, ancient as they are, the wise villagers planted to lodge in the cuckoo. How I love these old tales, and to visit the place, which are said to remain in their commemoration.

The hour between supper and bed-time is enlivened and turned to excellent mental account by my uncle's energetic conversation, which is always upon religious, literary, or moral subjects. At half past ten, he calls in his servants to join our vesper devotions, which closes the peaceful and unvaried day, resigning us to sleep as tranquil as itself.

Your agreeable image is often so obliging to visit my slumbers; a favour for which I am always grateful to her gentleman-usher, Mr. Morpheus.

Gotham, Oct. 1767.

Mr. Hinckley's clerk is arrived from Lichfield upon business to my uncle, and returns thither to-morrow morning. I feel impelled to send you a little letter by him, though we are so soon to meet and to enjoy each other's conversation, *viva voce*, through many ensuing months, perhaps years; yes, on the Abyssinian Hill, beneath the shade of that majestic and sacred pile which crowns it. On Monday we bend our course towards Lichfield; lovely, interesting Lichfield! where the sweetest days of my youth have passed—the days of prime:

'The best of days which crown our life,
That light upon the eye-lids dart,
And melting joys upon the heart.'

Nor are they yet all passed away; - it is at least, if not spring, high summer with you and I, who have not yet attained our twenty-fourth year.

Does it not seem some merit of the temper, that Honora and myself have been so tranquil and cheerful in this scene, when the idea of exchanging it for another inspires us with so much delight?

I begin to count the hours till Monday morning; yet this pleasure of expectation, perhaps more sweet and vivid than any reality which can crown it, is not without alloy, not without a mixture of regret. My amiable cousin will feel her retirement more lonely and deprived, for having had it enlivened during a whole month, by society so dear to her. That consciousness is painful. How I wish she might be permitted to return with us! but my aunt and uncle will not hear of it.

It is evening. Half an hour ago my fair cousin and myself were walking on the grass-plat, upon which our chamber window looks. The sun was setting splendidly; but, looking up, I saw an object more bright, more lovely - the face of my beauteous Honora at the open casement, packing up a little box which we were to take home with us. She leaned forward, bending upon me her fine eyes, luminous with joy, then lifted them up with a smile of delight, and clasped her dear hands together. I need not observe that it was the thoughts of our approaching return which produced this silent eloquence of pleasure. She would have restrained it, I well know, from respect to poor Miss Martin's very opposite sensations, had not that dear girl's eyes, heavy with regret, been fixed upon the

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

ground, and therefore incapable of seeing an emanation whose lustre must have pained her.

Ah! to how many gay and fashionable nymphs would our joy be unaccountable in returning to a home so quiet, to a life so uniform! They would think it only one degree more supportable than village solitude, and worthy only of a cold preference. So they must think, since neither balls, nor plays, nor lovers, await our arrival. We want them not. It is enough for us that, in the scene we love, we can have reading, music, friendship, the company of Emma, and a few more beings like her, who diffuse the spirit of pleasure wherever they approach; and with whom 'all seasons, and their change, all please alike'. The poet goes on to say,

'Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet.'

So shall I, so will Honora say, when we rise on Monday morning – the morning that is to light us back to Lichfield! – to you!

NOTE BY THE EDITOR

All the letters printed up to the year 1767 were addressed to a close female friend of Anna Seward's and were included by Sir Walter Scott in his edition of her Works. There is now a gap of several years, due to the fact that she did not keep copies of her letters during that period. By 1784 she must have realised that she had a place in the literary firmament, for in that year she commenced to make 'copies of letters, or parts of letters, that, after I had written them, appeared to me worth the attention of the public'. Thus, except for certain letters from 1781 onwards addressed to Dr. Whalley, published in his *Journals*, her regular correspondence may be said to begin in the autumn of 1784.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

DR. WHALLEY,

Lichfield, June 16. 1781.

Introducing Mr. Saville and you to each other, I knew, I should open to both a new source of delight. Each speaks to me of the other's power of pleasing with equal enthusiasm.

Mr. Saville & all he appears to be, only much more ingenious. To his chaste and classic taste in poetic composition I am indebted for many an ingenious idea, and for the happy alteration and higher polish of many a couplet. His temper is impetuous, yet kind and gentle.

As zephyr blowing underneath the violet,
Scarce wagging its sweet head, yet, being chaf'd,
Rough as the wind that takes the mountain pine,
And stoops it to the vale.

But this indignation always subsides in a few minutes, and leaves no trace upon his mind. His truth is sacred. His honour was never doubted, even by those who abuse him for not living with an ignorant and shrewish wife. No vice ever tainted his youth or riper years. He denies himself every luxury, yet knows not how to deny others. He has a bleeding sensibility of every want and every woe, and it is too much for his peace. He pours, as you know, all the spirit of his virtues and his talents into his song. How then should such singing fail to charm every noble-minded listener?

DR. WHALLEY,

Lichfield, November, 1781.

You will easily believe me when I assure you that

my luxuries are of another nature than those which are supplied by what is called polished life. Even my ingenious friends laugh at me for my awkward simplicity. I wear no powder in my hair, and mind nothing of dress beyond the clean and decent; and I could live for ever upon mutton broth, thickened with oatmeal, fried pork and potatoes. . . .

My faults are many. I am impetuous, resentful, and without an atom of what the world calls discretion, except in matters of property, where I think it is dishonest to be neglectful.

DR. WHALLEY,
Lichfield, Nov. 22, 1781.

. . . It will always delight me to perceive that our tastes, as well as our principles, accord; that my favourite authors have been your favourites. 'The mournful and angry Night thoughts' are, I see, engraven on your memory. I cannot look into them without gloomy rapture. The title I have borrowed for them from Johnson, who is tolerably civil to Young, brings that being, so heterogeneously constructed, to my imagination; at once the most liberal and the most ungenerous; the most dark, and the most enlightened; the most compassionate and the most merciless; the most friendly, and the least sincere; the best-humoured and the most acrimonious; the most soothing, and the most abusive; the most grateful, and the most ungrateful, of mankind.

I know him well. He was a native of Lichfield. His parents extremely poor. My mother's father, a clergyman, and an eminent schoolmaster,¹ gave him his education, and without the most distant idea of ever receiving a penny on his account, took equal pains with him as with the sons of the wealthiest gentlemen. He comes down for a month every two

For footnote see next page.

years, the guest of his daughter-in-law, an old friend of ours.

Dr. Johnson may be called the most liberal of men, because he has open-handed bounty for all who need it, and has been known to divide his last guinea with the distressed, when all he possessed was earned from day to day by his writings. Ungenerous because he has no mercy upon reputation of any sort, and sickens with envy over literary fame; as his late work sufficiently evinces. The most dark, for his bigotry and superstition pass credibility; they are malign, and violent. The most enlightened, since his prodigious genius and immense knowledge can throw lustre even upon the gloom of his own malignance. Compassionate, because he will weep for the unfortunate, provided their miseries arise either from sickness or poverty, and he will exert himself to relieve them. Merciless, for that he exults over the anguish and disgrace of every person, whose party or religious principles have been different to his own. Friendly, because he will kindly commiserate and serve with activity those who seek his good offices. The least sincere, because he delights to sneer and render contemptible those very people whose society he seeks, whom he caresses with tenderness, and whose interests he promotes. Soothing, for no man's manners are more affectionate as long as implicit assent is given to

¹ This was Mr. Hunter. In Boswell's *Johnson* we have this character of Mr. Hunter: 'According to Johnson's account, he was, "very severe and wrong-headedly severe. He used to beat us unmercifully, and he did not distinguish between ignorance and negligence, for he would beat a boy equally for not knowing a thing, as for neglecting to know it." It is, however, but justice to the memory of Mr. Hunter, to mention, that though he might err in being too severe, the school of Lichfield was very respectable in his time.' Boswell makes no mention of Mr. Hunter teaching Dr. Johnson gratuitously. He went to the school in the year 1781, being about twelve years of age, and remained there two years. — A.S.

his declamations. Abusive, because, from the instant that the slightest opposition is made to his opinions, he exalts his voice into thunder, and 'don't talk nonsense', and 'sir' or 'madam, it is false', and 'if you think so, you think like a fool', becomes the language he uses, and with which he interlards his imperious dogmas; while to the pliability of yielding fear and unlettered simplicity he is ever easy, cheerful, kind and indulgent. Grateful, because he dedicates his time to the society and exerts his good offices even to the most stupid people, from whom, or from whose family, he has received kindness in the days of his poverty. Ungrateful, because he would as soon expose the failings of his most liberal benefactors, as those of the most indifferent people; magnify them into faults, and lavish on them the epithets of blockhead, fool, and rascal. He has been in Lichfield some time.

I heard Johnson pronounce Beattie's charming *Minstrel* a dull, heavy, uninteresting fragment, whose second book he could never prevail on himself to look into. Mason's *English Garden* he calls a very miserable piece of laboured insignificance. Mr. Hayley styles him 'the noble leviathan of criticism, who lashes the troubled waters into a sublime but mischievous storm of turbulence and mud; yet allows that, with all his mighty powers, he is a very odd fish, though, he says, he reverences him as the lord of his element, but that he is welcome to tear his poems as the 'lion tears the kid'. From the publication of the *Lives of the Poets*, I date the downfall of just poetic taste in this kingdom. The splendour of Johnson's literary fame, and of his *ignis fatuus* reasoning, co-operating with the natural envy of the ignorant, or rather half learned, will enlist a numerous army under his banners, overpowering by their numbers and by their clamour the generous few who have perceptions of excellence, and who dare think for themselves.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

DR WHARTON,

Lichfield, May 1, 1782.

My heart revolted against any sportive profanation of poor Chatterton's to me ever sacred name. His fate has cost me a thousand sighs, and many a tear. It is an everlasting blot upon English humanity. If Chatterton wrote those famous poems, his wonderful talents ought to have secured him patronage. The deceit, excused by poverty, should have been pardoned. At any rate, the contempt he met was base and inhuman.

DR WHARTON,

London, April 10, 1783.

From the midst of hurries, which even surpass my formidable dread of their excess, let me snatch a few minutes to send my beloved and excellling friend a few hasty and grateful lines by the most glorious of her sex. Powers, which surpass every idea I had formed of their possibility, press so forcibly upon my recollection that my pen has more than once stood still upon my paper, transfixed by the consciousness how poor and inadequate are all words to paint my Siddonian idolatry. Every attempt fruitless to procure boxes. I saw her for the first time, at the hazard of my life, by struggling through the terrible, fierce, maddening crowd into the pit. She only could have recompensed the terrors and dangers of the attempt; and the recompense was full! She far outstrips that ideal perfection which, through life, I have vainly searched for in the theatre. Her energy, her pathos, her majestic scorn, is inspired by the same sensibility and nobleness of soul, which produces all the varied expressions of these passions in Giovanni's singing, and casts the Yates, the Crawfords, and the Youngs at the same immeasurable distance, at which he throws every

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

other singer in the world. I have seen her in *Jane Shore* and *Calista* – conceive with what rapture, for it is impossible to describe it. I am as devoted to her as yourself, and my affection keeps pace with my astonishment and delight; for I have conversed with her, hung upon every word which fell from that charming lip; but I never felt myself so awed in my life. The most awkward embarrassment was the consequence.

Mrs. Siddons in the theatre, and Giovanni in the orchestra, have made all amusements, dramatic and musical, so insipid where they are not, that I hate to go to the opera, the oratorio, the concerts; and to a play I will not be dragged when the sun of excellence withdraws her beams, or where they are not accustomed to shine. We are going to the Pantheon to-night. I expect to be finely haunted by the demon *ennui* in that brilliant dome.

DR. WHALLEY,

London, May 10, 1783.

... Fortune favours the spirited. No box to be procured for *Venice Preserved*. I prevailed with my little Jessica to whirl down to the playhouse and under the protection of her brother, to wait in the lobby for the chance of given-up places. The romance of the hope was finely scouted by Mr. Barugh and others; but I persisted and we ventured. A gentleman of Mrs. B.'s train accidentally popped us, before the play began, into places a man was keeping in the fifth row of the front boxes, on our promise of retiring if they were claimed before the first act was over, after which we should by the rule of the house, have a right to keep them. Oh! even when the siren spoke, with all her graces and melting tones, I wished to have the speech over, so ardently did I long for the moment when possession for the night might become secure.

Our stars fought for us, the act was over, the box-keeper retired with a shilling reward for not bustling us, and in a second the people who had taken the places claimed them! Vain was their claim, our beaux asserted our right to keep them, and keep them we did. But time flies, and words could but feebly shadow forth the yearnings of my soul that night; my tears flowed in full and ceaseless streams. Her superhuman powers have been so strictly just to every character she has represented that I find it impossible to pronounce in which she is greatest, yet if some friend was to say to me, I am only to see Mrs. Siddons in one character, and if this friend was a being capable of discerning and strongly feeling all her excellences, and was to leave to me the choice of the character, I should say *Calista*, because, though less soul-harrowing than *Belshera*, it exhibits such a conflicting and sublime variety of passions.

Miss Weston,

Litchfield, Oct. 29, 1784.

I have lately been in the almost daily habit of contemplating a very melancholy spectacle. The great Johnson is here, labouring under the paroxysms of a disease, which must speedily be fatal. He shrinks from the consciousness with the extremest horror. It is by his repeatedly expressed desire that I visit him often: yet I am sure he neither does, nor ever did feel much regard for me; but he would fain escape, for a time, in any society, from the terrible idea of his approaching dissolution. I never would be awed by his sarcasms, or his frowns, into acquiescence with his general injustice to the merits of *other* writers; with his national, or party aversions; but I feel the truest compassion for his present sufferings, and fervently wish I had power to relieve them.

A few days since I was to drink tea with him, by his

request, at Mrs. Porter's. When I went into the room, he was in deep but agitated slumber, in an arm-chair. Opening the door with that caution due to the sick, he did not awaken at my entrance. I stood by him several minutes, mournfully contemplating the temporary suspension of those vast intellectual powers, which must so soon, as to *this* world, be eternally quenched.

Upon the servant entering to announce the arrival of a gentleman of the university, introduced by Mr. White, he awoke with convulsive starts, — but rising, with more alacrity than could have been expected, he said, 'Come, my dear lady, let you and I attend these gentlemen in the study.' He received them with more than usual complacence; but whimsically chose to get astride upon his chair-seat, with his face to its back, keeping a trotting motion as if on horseback; but, in this odd position, he poured forth streams of eloquence, illumined by frequent flashes of wit and humour, without any tincture of malignity. That amusing part of this conversation, which alluded to the learned Pig, and his demi-rational exhibitions, I shall transmit to you hereafter.

REV. T. S. WHALLEY,

Lichfield, Nov. 7, 1784.

The old literary Colossus¹ has been some time in Lichfield. The extinction, in our sphere, of that mighty spirit approaches fast. A confirmed dropsy deluges the vital source. It is melancholy to observe with what terror he contemplates his approaching fate. The religion of Johnson was always deeply tintured with that gloomy and servile superstition which marks his political opinions. He expresses these terrors, and justly calls them *miserable*, which thus shrink from the exchange of a diseased and painful existence, which

¹ Johnson.

gentler human beings consider as the all-recompensing reward of a well-spent life. Yet have not these humiliating terrors by any means subdued that malevolent and envious pride, and literary perversity, which were ever the vices of his heart, and to which he perpetually sacrificed, and continues to sacrifice, the fidelity of representation, and the veracity of decision. His memory is considerably impaired, but his eloquence rolls on in its *ordinary* majestic torrent, when he speaks at all. My heart aches to see him labour for his breath, which he draws with great effort indeed. It is not improbable that this literary comet may *set* where it *rose*, and Litchfield receive its pale and stern remains.

WM. HAYLEY, ESQ.,

Litchfield, Dec. 23, 1784.

At last, my dear bard, extinct is that mighty spirit,¹ in which so much good and evil, so much large expansion and illiberal narrowness of mind, were blended; that enlightened the whole literary world with the splendours of his imagination, and, at times, with the steadiest fires of judgment; and, yet more frequently, darkened it with spleen and envy; potent, through the resistless powers of his understanding, to shroud the fairest claims of rival excellence. *Indiscriminate* praise is pouring, in full tides, around his tomb, and characteristic *reality* is overwhelmed in the torrent.

Dr. Darwin called here the other morning. We walked to Mr. Saville's garden, accompanied by its owner. Talking about some rare and beautiful plants, Dr. Darwin turned to me, and asked if I had seen the *CALMIA*. On my saying *no*, he continued - 'It is a flower of such exquisite beauty, that would make you

¹ Johnson.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

waste the summer's day in examining it: – you would forget the hour of dinner; all your senses would be absorbed in *one*; you would be all *eye*.' I smiled, and asked him to describe it: 'What in the first place, was its colour?' – 'Precisely that of a seraph's plume.' We laughed, as he intended we should, at the *accuracy* of the description. He told us afterward, that he had heard much of the flower, but, as yet, had not seen it.

LADY MARIANNI CARNEGIE,

Lichfield, March 21, 1785.

Almost five years are elapsed since Dr. Darwin left Lichfield. A handsome young widow, relict of Colonel Pool, by whom she had three children, drew from us, in the hymeneal chain, our celebrated physician, our poetic and witty friend.

The Doctor was in love like a very *Celadon*, and a numerous young family are springing up in consequence of a union, which was certainly a little unaccountable; not that there was any wonder that a fine graceful, and affluent young woman should fascinate a grave philosopher; but that a sage of no elegant external, and sunk into the vale of years, should, by so gay a lady, be preferred to younger, richer, and handsomer suitors, was the marvel; especially since, though lively, benevolent, and by no means deficient in native wit, she was never suspected of a taste for science, or works of imagination. Yet so it was; and she makes her ponderous spouse a very attached, and indeed devoted wife! The poetic philosopher, in return, transfers the amusement of his leisure hours, from the study of botany and mechanics, and the composition of odes, and heroic verses, to fabricating riddles and charads! Thus employed, his mind is somewhat in the same predicament with Hercules's body, when he sat amongst the women, and handled the distaff.

JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.,

Lichfield, March 27, 1785.

I regret that it is not in my power to collect more anecdotes of Dr. Johnson's infancy. My mother passed her days of girlhood with an uncle at Warwick, consequently was absent from home in the school-boy days of the great man; neither did I ever hear her mention any of the promissory sparkles which doubtless burst forth, though no records of them are within my knowledge. I cannot meet with any contemporary of those his *very* youthful days. They are all, I fear, like my poor mother, gone to their eternal home, and thus are our fountains of juvenile intelligence dried up. Mrs. Lucy Porter, who, were she in health, could communicate more than she would take the trouble of doing, is following apace her illustrious father-in-law. She is now too ill to be accessible to any of her friends, except Mr. Pearson; and were it otherwise, I do not believe that a kneeling world would obtain from her the letters you wish for.

On inquiring after Dr. Johnson, she has often read one of his recent epistles. As she read, I secretly wondered to perceive that they contained no traces of genius. They might have been *any* person's composition. When this is the case, it is injudicious to publish such inconclusive testimonies. Several letters of his have appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, that could interest no one by their intrinsic vigour. They will be eagerly read because they are Johnson's; but I have often thought, that we never rise from any composition by the pen of the illustrious, with exactly the same degree of respect for the talents of the author with which we sat down to peruse it; our mass of admiration is either increased or diminished. If it is but by a single grain, that grain is something.

His letter to the Chancellor is a very stiff, indifferent

performance, tinctured with a sort of covert resentment to the King, that looks ungrateful for past obligations. I wonder how he could bear the thoughts of such a request being made to his Majesty, since he had a capital of three thousand pounds, out of which he might have drawn to support the expence of continental travelling.

You request the conversation that passed between Johnson and myself in company, on the subject of Mrs. Elizabeth Aston of Stowe Hill, then living, with whom he always past so much time when he was in Lichfield, and for whom he professed so great a friendship.

'I have often heard my mother say, Doctor, that Mrs. Elizabeth Aston was, in her youth, a very beautiful woman; and that, with all the censoriousness and spiteful spleen of a very bad temper, she had great powers of pleasing; that she was lively, insinuating, and intelligent.

'I knew her not till the vivacity of her youth had long been extinguished, and I confess I looked in vain for the traces of former ability. I wish to have *your* opinion, Sir, of what she was, *you* who knew her so well in her *best* days.'

'My dear, when thy mother told thee Aston was handsome, thy mother told thee truth: She was very handsome. When thy mother told thee that Aston loved to abuse her neighbours, she told thee truth; but when thy mother told thee that Aston had any marked ability in that same abusive business, that wit gave it zest, or imagination colour, thy mother did not tell thee truth. No, no, Madam, Aston's understanding was not of any strength, either native or acquired.'

'But, Sir, I have heard you say, that her sister's husband, Mr. Walmsley, was a man of bright parts, and extensive knowledge; that he was also a man of strong passions, and, though benevolent in a thousand instances, yet irascible in as many. It is well known that

Mr. Walmesley was considerably concerned by this lady; as witness Mr. Hinton's constant visits, and presence at his table, in despite of its master's avowed aversion. Could it be that, without some marked intellectual power, he could obtain absolute dominion over such a man?"

"Madam, I have said, and truly, that Walmesley had bright and extensive powers of mind; that they had been cultivated by familiarity with the best authors, and by connections with the learned and polite. It is a fact, that Aston obtained nearly absolute dominion over his will; it is no less a fact, that his disposition was irritable and violent. But Walmesley was a man; and there is no man who can resist the repeated attacks of a furious woman. Walmesley had no alternative but to submit, or turn her out of doors."

I have procured, from Mr. Levett, of this city, the inclosed copy of an original¹ letter of Dr. Johnson's. Though its style may not bear the stamp of its author's genius, yet it is illumed with a soft ray of filial piety, which cannot fail to cast its portion of additional lustre, however small, on the amiable side of the Johnsonian medal.

The genuine lovers of the poetic science look with anxious eyes to Mr. Boswell, desiring that every merit of the stupendous mortal may be shewn in its fairest light; but expecting also, that impartial justice, so worthy of a generous mind, which the popular cry cannot influence to flatter the object of discrimination, nor yet the yearnings of remembered amity induce, to invest that object with unreal perfection, injurious, from the severity of his censures, to the rights of others.

There can be no doubt of the authenticity of that little anecdote of Johnson's infancy; the verses he made at three years old, on having killed, by treading upon it, his eleventh duck. Mrs. Lucy Porter is a woman of the

¹ This letter appears in Mr. Boswell's *Life of Dr. Johnson*. - A. S.

strictest veracity; and a more conscientious creature could not live than old Mrs. Johnson, who, I have heard Mrs. Porter say, has often mentioned the circumstances to her. It is curious to remark, in these little verses, the poetic seed which afterwards bore plenteous fruits, of so rich a lustre and flavour. Everything Johnson wrote was poetry; for the poetic essence consists not in rhyme and measure, which are only its trappings, but in that strength, and glow of fancy, to which all the works of art and nature stand in prompt administration; in that rich harmony of period,

‘More tunable than needs the metric powers
To add more sweetness.’

We observe, also, in those infant verses, the seeds of that superstition which grew with his growth, and operated so strongly through his future life.

I have often heard my mother say she perfectly remembered his wife. He has recorded of her that beauty which existed only in his imagination. She had a very red face, and very indifferent features; and her manners in advanced life, for her children were all grown up when Johnson first saw her, had an unbecoming excess of girlish levity, and disgusting affectation. The rustic prettiness, and artless manners of her daughter, the present Mrs. Lucy Porter, had won Johnson's youthful heart, when she was upon a visit at my grandfather's in Johnson's school-days. Disgusted by his unsightly form, she had a personal aversion to him, nor could the beautiful verses he addressed to her, teach her to endure him. The nymph, at length, returned to her parents at Birmingham, and was soon forgotten. Business taking Johnson to Birmingham, on the death of his own father, and calling upon his coy mistress there, he found her father dying. He passed all his leisure hours at Mr.

Porter's, attending his sick-bed, and, in a few months after his death, asked Mrs. Johnson's consent to marry the old widow. After expressing her surprise at a request so extraordinary - 'no, Sam, my willing consent you will never have to so preposterous a union. You are not twenty-five, and she is turned fifty. If she had any prudence, this request had never been made to me. Where are your means of subsistence? Porter has died poor, in consequence of his wife's expensive habits. You have great talents, but, as yet, have turned them into no profitable channel.' - 'Mother, I have not deceived Mrs. Porter: I have told her the worst of me; that I am of mean extraction; that I have no money; and that I have had an uncle hanged. She replied, that she valued no one more or less for his descent; that she had no more money than myself; and that, though she had not had a relation hanged, she had fifty who deserved hanging.'

And thus became accomplished this very curious amour. Adieu, Sir, go on and prosper in your arduous task of presenting to the world the portrait of Johnson's mind and manners. If faithful, brilliant will be its lights, but deep its shades.

Mrs. KNOWLES,¹

March 27, 1785.

Mr. Boswell has applied to me for Johnsonian records for his life of the despot. If he inserts them un mutilated, as I have arranged them, they will contribute to display Johnson's real character to the public; that strange compound of great talents, weak and absurd prejudices, strong, but unfruitful devotion; intolerant

¹ The celebrated quaker lady who worked the King's picture so admirably in worsted. When Molly Morris of Ragby, she was stiled the beauty of Staffordshire. She survived her husband, Dr. Knowles, an eminent physician in London, many years, and died February 4, 1807, aged 80. - A. S.

fierceness; compassionate munificence, and corroding envy. I was fearful that Mr. Boswell's personal attachment would have scrupled to throw in those dark shades which truth commands should be employed in drawing the Johnsonian portrait; but these fears are considerably dissipated by the style of Mr. Boswell's acknowledgments for the materials I had sent him, and for the perfect impartiality with which I had spoken of Johnson's virtues and faults. He desires I will send him the minutes I made at the time of that, as he justly calls it, tremendous conversation at Dilly's, between you and him, on the subject of Miss Harry's commencing quaker. Boswell had so often spoke to me, with regret, over the ferocious, reasonless, and unchristian violence of his idol that night, it looks impartial beyond my hopes, that he requests me to arrange it. I had omitted to send it in the first collection, from my hopelessness that Mr. Boswell would insert it in his life of the Colossus. Time may have worn away those deep-indented lines of bigot fierceness from the memory of the biographer, and the hand of affection may not be firm enough to resolve upon engraving them.

O! yes, as you observe, dreadful were the horrors which attended poor Johnson's dying state. His religion was certainly not of that nature which sheds comfort on the deathbed-pillow. I believe his faith was sincere, and therefore could not fail to reproach his heart, which had swelled with pride, envy, and hatred, through the whole course of his existence. But religious feeling, on which you lay so great a stress, was not the desideratum in Johnson's virtue. He was no cold moralist; it was obedience, meekness, and universal benevolence, whose absence from his heart, driven away by the turbulent fierceness and jealousy of his unbridled passions, filled with so much horror the darkness of the grave. Those glowing

aspirations in religion which are termed enthusiasm, cannot be rationally considered — a test of its truth. Every why can I have its answer — I verily believe Johnson would have stood that trial for a system to whose precept he yet disdained to bend his proud and stubborn heart. He is different from him was the dear bed of that sweet excellence, whom he abused at Dilly — at the time of the "Heaven wench!"

WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq.

Ichfield, April 10, 1735.

Health is become to me a very tiresome task-mistress. The exercise is exact me unconveniently — abridge my epistolary leisure.

Mr. Boswell lately passed a few days in Ichfield. I did not find him quite so candid and ingenuous on the subject of Johnson, as I had hoped from the style of his letters. He affected to distinguish, in the despot's favour, between envy and literary jealousy. I maintained, that it was a sophistic distinction, without a real difference. Mr. Boswell urged the unlikelihood that he, who had established his own fame on other ground than that of poetry, should envy poetic reputation, especially where it was posthumous, and seemed to believe that his injustice to Milton, Prior, Gray, Collins, &c. proceeded from real want of taste for the higher orders of verse, his judgment being too rigidly severe to relish the enthusiasms of imagination.

Affection is apt to start from the impartiality of calling faults by their proper names. Mr. Boswell soon after, unawares, observed that Johnson had been galled by David Garrick's instant success, and long eclat, who had set sail with himself on the sea of public life; that he took an aversion to him on that account; that it was a little cruel in the great man not once to name David Garrick in his preface to *Shakespeare*! and base, said I, as well as unkind. Garrick! who had

restored that transcendent author to the taste of the public, after it had recreantly and long receded from him; especially as this restorer had been the companion of his youth. He was galled by Garrick's prosperity, rejoined Mr. Boswell. Ah! said I, you now, unawares, cede to my position. If the author of the *Rambler* could stoop to envy a player, for the hasty splendour of a reputation which, compared to his own, however that might, for some time, be hid in the night of obscurity, must, in the end, prove as the meteor of an hour to the permanent light of the sun, it cannot be doubted, but his injustice to Milton, Gray, Collins, Prior, &c., proceeding from the same cause, produced that levelling system of criticism, 'which lifts the mean, and lays the mighty low'. Mr. Boswell's comment upon this observation was, that dissenting share of the head, to which folk are reduced, when they will not be convinced, yet find their stores of defence exhausted.

Mr. B. confessed his idea that Johnson was a Roman Catholic in his heart. - I have heard him, said he, uniformly defend the cruel executions of that dark bigot, Queen Mary.

To Mrs. G—,

Lichfield, Aug. 27, 1785.

I cannot doubt your having been infinitely amused by Mr. Boswell's tour. The general style is somewhat too careless, and its egotism is ridiculed; but surely to the cold-hearted and fastidious reader only, will it seem ridiculous. The slipshod style is richly compensated by the palpable fidelity of the interesting anecdotes; the egotism, by that good humoured ingenuousness with which it is given, and by its unsuspecting confidence in the candour of the reader. The incidents, and characteristic traits of this valuable work, grapple our attention perforce. How strongly our

imagination is impressed when the massive Being is presented to it stalking, like a Greenland bear, over the barren Hebrides, roaming round the black rocks, and lonely coasts, in a small boat, on rough seas, and saluting Flora Macdonald in the Isle of Sky!

TO MRS. MOMPESAN,

Wellshurn, near Watwick, Dec. 31, 1785.

Behold, dear Mrs. Mompessan, the promised minutes of that curious conversation which once passed at Mr. Dilly's, the book-eller in a literary party, formed by Dr. Johnson, Mr. Boswell, Dr. Mayo, and others, whom Mr. Knowles and myself had been invited to meet, and in which Dr. Johnson and that lady disputed so earnestly. It is, however, previously necessary that you should know the history of the very amiable young woman who was the subject of their debate.

Miss Jenny Harry that was, for she afterwards married, and died ere the first nuptial year expired, was the daughter of a rich planter in the East Indies. He sent her over to England to receive her education, in the house of his friend, Mr. Spry, where Mrs. Knowles, the celebrated quaker, was frequently a visitor. Mr. Spry affected wit, and was perpetually rallying Mrs. Knowles on the subject of her quakerism, in the presence of this young, gentle and ingenuous girl; who, at the age of eighteen, had received what is called a proper education, one of modern accomplishments, without having been much instructed in the nature and grounds of her religious belief. Upon these visits Mrs. Knowles was often led into a serious defence of quaker-principles. She speaks with clear and graceful eloquence on every subject. Her antagonists were shallow theologians, and opposed only idle and pointless raillery to deep and long-studied reasoning on the precepts of Scripture, uttered in persuasive

accents, and clothed with all the beauty of language. Without any *design* of making a proselyte she gained one.

Miss Harry grew pensively serious, and meditated perpetually on all which had dropt from the lips of Mrs. Knowles on a theme, the infinite importance of which she then, perhaps, first began to feel. At length her imagination pursuing this its primal religious bias, she believed quakerism the only true Christianity. Beneath such conviction, she thought it her duty to join, at every hazard of worldly interest, that class of worshippers. On declaring these sentiments, several ingenious clergymen were commissioned to reason with her; but we all know the force of first impressions in theology. This young lady was argued with by the divines, and threatened by her guardian in vain. She persisted in resigning her splendid expectations for what appeared to her the path of duty.

Her father, on being made acquainted with her changed faith, informed her that she might choose between an hundred thousand pounds and his favour, or two thousand pounds and his renunciation, as she continued a churchwoman or commenced a quaker.

Miss Harry lamented her father's displeasure, but thanked him for the pecuniary alternative, assuring him that it included all her wishes as to fortune.

Soon after she left her guardian's house, and boarded in that of Mrs. Knowles; to her she often observed, that Dr. Johnson's displeasure, whom she had seen frequently at her guardian's, and who had always appeared fond of her, was amongst the greatest mortifications of her then situation. Once she came home in tears, and told her friend she had met Dr. Johnson in the street, and had ventured to ask him how he did; but that he would not deign to answer her, and walked scornfully on. She added, 'you are to meet him soon at Mr. Dilly's - plead for me.'

Thus far as predatory to those requested minutes, which I made at the time of the ensuing conversation. It commenced with Mrs. Knowles saying, 'I am to ask thy indulgence, Doctor, towards a gentle female to whom thou usest to be kind, and who is uneasy at the loss of that kindness. Jimmy Harry weeps at the consciousness that thou wilt not speak to her.'

'Madam, I hate the odious wench, and desire you will not talk to me about her.'

'Yet what is her crime, Doctor?' 'Apostasy, Madam, apostasy from the community in which she was educated.'

'Surely the quitting one community for another cannot be a crime, if it is done from motives of conscience. Hadst thou been educated in the Romish church, I must suppose thou wouldst have abjured its errors, and that there would have been merit in the abjuration.'

'Madam, if I had been educated in the Roman Catholic faith, I believe I should have questioned my right to quit the religion of my fathers, therefore, well may I hate the arrogance of a young wench, who sets herself up for a judge on theological points, and deserts the religion in whose bosom she was nurtured.'

'She has not done so; the name and the faith of Christians are not denied to the sectaries.'

'If the name is not, the common sense is.'

'I will not dispute this point with thee, Doctor, at least at present, it would carry us too far. Suppose it granted, that, in the mind of a young girl, the weaker arguments appeared the strongest, her want of better judgment should excite thy pity, not thy resentment.'

'Madam, it has my anger and my contempt, and always will have them.'

'Consider, Doctor, she must be sincere. - Consider what a noble fortune she has sacrificed.'

'Madam, Madam, I have never taught myself to consider that the association of folly can extenuate guilt.'

'Ah! Doctor, we cannot rationally suppose that the Deity will not pardon a defect in judgment supposing it should prove one in that breast where the consideration of serving him, according to its idea, in spirit and truth, has been a preferable inducement to that of worldly interest.'

'Madam, I pretend not to set bounds to the mercy of the Deity; but I hate the wench, and shall ever hate her. I hate all impudence, but the impudence of a chit's apostasy I *mauseate*.'

'Jenny is a very gentle creature. She trembles to have offended her parent, though far removed from his presence; she grieves to have offended her guardian, and she is sorry to have offended Dr. Johnson, whom she loved, admired, and honoured.'

'Why, then, Madam, did she not consult the man whom she pretends to have loved, admired, and honoured, upon her newfangled scruples? If she had looked up to that man with any degree of the respect she professes, she would have supposed his ability to judge of fit and right, at least equal to that of a raw wench just out of her primmer.'

'Ah! Doctor, remember it was not from amongst the witty and the learned that Christ selected his disciples, and constituted the teachers of his precepts. Jenny thinks Dr. Johnson great and good; but she also thinks the gospel demands and enjoins a simpler form of worship than that of the established church; and that it is not in wit and eloquence to supersede the force of what appears to her a plain and regular system, which cancels all typical and mysterious ceremonies, as fruitless and even idolatrous; and asks only obedience to its injunctions, and the ingenuous homage of a devout heart.'

'The homage of a fool-head, madam, you should say, if you will pester me about the ridiculous wench.'

'If thou chooseth to suppose her ridiculous, thou canst not deny that he has been religious, sincere, disinterested. Canst thou believe that the gate of Heaven will be shut to the tender and pious mind, whose *first* consideration has been that of apprehended duty.'

'Pho, pho, Madam, who says it will?'

'Then if Heaven shuts not its gate, shall man shut his heart? If the Deity accept the homage of such as sincerely give him under every form of worship, Dr. Johnson and this humble girl will, it is to be hoped, meet in a blessed eternity, whether human animosity must *not* be carried.'

'Madam, I am not fond of meeting fools anywhere; they are detestable company, and while it is in my power to avoid conversing with them, I certainly shall exert that power, and so you may tell the odious wench whom you have persuaded to think herself a saint, and of whom you will, I suppose, make a preacher, but I shall take care she does not preach to *me*.'

The loud and angry tone in which he thundered out these replies to his calm and able antagonist, frightened us all, except Mrs. Knowles, who gently, not sarcastically, smiled at his injustice. Mr. Boswell whispered me, 'I never saw this mighty lion so chafed before.'

I have withdrawn myself from a very interesting circle to transcribe for you these extracts. Its social temptations allured me, some five days past, from the side of my aged nursing, whom I so seldom leave, to the now frozen banks of Warwickshire's immortal stream, which, for the palm of poetic glory, vies, nay, more than vies, with that of the Meles and the Mincio. Now, if you were a fellow of a college, you would probably most unpatriotically question at least the trans-

cendency of the claim; but that is the scepticism of pedantry. I have observed that learning, freed from her spells by the power of genuine taste and sensibility, always allows it. I am afraid you do not love poetry enough to interest yourself in the question. Mrs. Mompessan is the only instance I have ever met, where a strong understanding, a fine imagination, and a feeling heart, have not been poignantly alive to its charms. *You*, of all people, you to be this provoking *unique*, who, in history, chronology, memoir, and moral philosophy, are an absolute walking library! In the ordinarily furnished bosom, I expect to find a torpedo of this sort but in yours! — I am certainly very sweet-tempered not to lose my patience. Adieu!

COURT DEWES, ESQ.,

Lichfield, Jan. 30, 1786.

After a gradual decline of a few months, we have lost dear Mrs. Porter, the earliest object of Dr. Johnson's love. This was some years before he married her mother. In youth, her fair, clean complexion, bloom, and rustic prettiness, pleased the men. More than once she might have married advantageously; but as to the enamoured affections,

'High Taurus' snow, fann'd by the eastern wind,
Was not more cold.'

Spite of the accustomed petulance of her temper and odd perverseness, since she had no malignance, I regret her as a friendly creature, of intrinsic worth, with whom, from childhood, I had been intimate. She was one of those few beings who, from a sturdy singularity of temper, and some prominent good qualities of head and heart, was enabled, even in her days of scanty maintenance, to make society glad to receive, and pet the grown spoiled child. Affluence

was not hers till it came to her in her fifth year, by the death of her eldest brother. From the age of twenty till that period, she had boarded in Lichfield with Dr. Johnson's mother, who still kept that little bookseller's shop, by which her husband had supplied the scanty means of existence. Meantime, Lucy Porter kept the best company of our little city, but would make no engagement on market-days, lest Granny, as he called Mr. Johnson, should catch cold by serving in the shop. Here Lucy Porter took her place, standing behind the counter, nor thought it a disgrace to thank a poor person who purchased from her a penny battle-dore.

With a marked vulgarity of address and language, and but little intellectual cultivation, he had a certain shrewdness of understanding, and piquant humour, with the most perfect truth and integrity. By these good traits in her character, were the most respectable inhabitants of this place induced to be at, with kind smiles, her mulish obstinacy, and perverse contradictions. Johnson himself, often her guest, set the example, and extended to her that compliant indulgence which he shewed not to any other person. I have heard her scold him like a school-boy, for soiling her floor with his shoes, for she was clean as a Dutchwoman in her house, and exactly neat in her person. Dress too she loved in her odd way; but we will not assert that the Graces were her handmaids. Friendly, cordial, and cheerful to those she loved, she was more esteemed, more amusing, and more regretted, than many a polished character, over whose smooth, but insipid surface, the attention of those who have *mind* passes listless and uninterested.

JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.,

Lichfield, March 25, —.

'No, Sir,' there are not any lees — the spirit of your

Tour with Johnson runs clear to the last syllable. Those who are not interested in its anecdotes, can have little intellectual curiosity and no imagination. Those who are not entertained with the perpetual triumph of sarcastic wit over fair ingenuous argument, must be sturdier moralists than even Johnson himself affected to have been; and those who do not love the biographer, as they read, whatever imperfections they may find in the massive Being whom he so strongly characterises, can have no hearts.

I confess, however, that it was not without some surprise that I perceived so much exultation avowed concerning the noble blood which flows in your veins; since it is more honourable for a man of distinguished ingenuity to have been obscurely than splendidly descended; because then his distinctions are more exclusively his *own*. Often, as well you are aware, have nobles, princes, perhaps kings, stood awed in the presence of the son of a Lichfield bookseller. Can the recorder of *his* life and actions think birth of consequence? Mr. Boswell is too humble in fancying he can derive honour from noble ancestry. It is for the line of Bruce to be proud of the historian of Corsica — It is for the House of Auchinlec to boast of him who, with the most fervent personal attachment to an illustrious literary character, has yet been sufficiently faithful to the just claims of the public upon biographic fidelity, to represent him, not as his weak or prejudiced idolaters might wish to behold him; not in the light in which *they* desire to contemplate Johnson, who pronounce his writings to be an obscure jargon of pompous pedantry, and his imputed virtues a superstitious larrago of pharisaic ostentation; but as he *was*, the most wonderful composition of great and absurd, of misanthropy and benevolence, of luminous intellect and prejudiced darkness, that was ever produced in the human breast.

The only part of this work whose omission I could much have wished, is the passage which records the despot's injustice to Mrs. Montague's ingenious and able *Treatise on Shakspeare*. Its omission, as all my correspondents observe, would have been much more consonant than its appearance to the philanthropy of the biographer.

I have, it is true, seen a great deal of nonsense about your *Tour* in the public press; and that both in its praise and abuse. It is hard to say who are most absurd, they who vilify it, entertaining effusions, as vapid and uninteresting, or they who laud it, they see a perfect character in the independent mortal whom its pages exhibit in lights so striking and so various; bowing down before the relics of popish superstition; repaying the hospitable kindness of the Scotch professors with unfeeling exultation over the barrenness of their country, and the imputed folly of their religion; and roaming, like a Greenland bear, over Caledonia and her lonely isles.

I have written to the elegant bard of Sussex, to Mr. Whalley, who is on the Continent, to my late and ever-honoured friend, Dr. John Jebb, and my other literary correspondents upon the merits of your *Tour*; and in a spirit of warm encomium upon the gay benevolence, characteristic traits, scenic graces, and biographic fidelity which adorn its pages; observing also how valuable a counterpart it forms to Dr. Johnson's *Tour* to the Hebrides. In *one* we perceive, through a medium of solemn and sublime eloquence, in what light Scotland, her nobles, her professors, and her chieftains appeared to the august wanderer; in the *other* how the growling philosopher appeared to them. If the use of biography is to ascertain and discriminate character, its domestic minuteness is its most essential excellence.

The nearly universal approbation with which those

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

whose opinions are of consequence, have mentioned your work to me, precludes all ideas of defence against the frothy spleen descending so continually upon ingenious composition from the pen of anonymous criticism. It descends in plenteous effusion,

‘But leaves no spot or blame behind.’

MISS WESTON,
Lichfield, July 20, 1786.

For the first time, I saw the justly celebrated Mrs. Siddons in comedy, – in *Rosalind*. – but though her smile is as enchanting, as her frown is magnificent, as her tears are irresistible, yet the playful scintillations of colloquial wit, which most strongly mark that character, suit not the dignity of the Siddonian form and countenance. Then her dress was injudicious. The scrupulous prudery of decency, produced an ambiguous vestment, that seemed neither male nor female. When she first came on as the princess, nothing could be more charming; nor than when she resumed her original character, and exchanged comic spirit for dignified tenderness.

One of those rays of exquisite and original discrimination, which her genius so perpetually elicits, shone out on her first rushing upon the stage in her own resumed person and dress; when she bent her knee to her father, the Duke, and said –

‘To you I give myself – for I am yours;’

and when, falling into Orlando’s arms, she repeated the same words, –

‘To *you* I give myself – for I am *yours*!’

The marked difference of her look and voice in

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

repeating that line, and particularly the last word of it, was inimitably striking. The tender joy of filial love was in the first; the whole soul of enamoured transport in the second. The extremely heightened emphasis on the word *yours*, produced an effect greater than you can conceive could result from the circumstance, without seeing and hearing it given by that mistress of the passions.

DR. WHALLEY,

Lichfield, Aug. 13, 1786.

Mrs. Piozzi, a week after her marriage, showed Dr. Dobson a letter from Johnson filled with the most brutal invectives. Few obligations could be of more binding force to demand the returns of indulgent kindness than his to Mrs. Thrale; lifted up, then unpensioned, by her hand from a situation penurious and comfortless, to opulence and the luxury he loved so well. How highly was he indebted for the solicitous attention of so many years, every taste gratified, every troublesome whim indulged, every arrogant brutality passed over! To remonstrate against the indiscretion of her choice was the duty of friendship, before that choice was ratified at the altar; but subsequent upbraiding was neither consistent with gratitude nor Christianity. Mrs. Thrale had violated no law of God, no institution of man. It was Johnson's part to have alleviated, not increased, the inevitable mortifications of so imprudent a marriage. Johnson ought to have spread that mighty shield, which he could have formed by his notice and his eloquence, between his fair patroness and the contempt of the world, especially since that shield had been tempered into a great accession of strength by the respectability and consequence with which he appeared at Streatham through the course of more than 20 years. I think his ingratitude to Mrs. Piozzi dark and indefensible, as Lactilla's to

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

Miss More. I do not approve of either, but I think it unfair that one should be considered a saint, the other a demon.¹

DR. WHALLEY,
Lichfield, August 1786.

It was not given me to taste the luxury of Siddonian sorrow, but I saw the glorious creature in *Rosalind*. In spite of the disadvantage of a very vilely chosen dress, I entirely think with you, against the clamour of the multitude, that her smiles are as fascinating as her frowns are magnificent, as her tears are irresistible.²

MR. W. NEWTON,
Lichfield, Dec. 17, 1786.

Yet too agitated to employ my pen on indifferent subjects, it is to such friends as yourself only that I am capable of writing. You who have long known and loved my poor father; you who are so kindly interested in my feelings, and in my destiny; it is you whom I wish

¹ Lactilla was the poetical name given to a Bristol milkwoman named Ann Yearsley, who wrote a poem which Hannah More thought so good that she raised a subscription to cover the cost of its publication. £500 was raised and invested in the funds for Lactilla's benefit. A balance of £10 in cash was handed by Hannah More to Ann Yearsley, who flung the money at the head of her patroness. Upon which Hannah More remarked: 'May we never meet again till we meet in Heaven.' Everybody thought that Lactilla had displayed an ungrateful nature; but she did not grasp the subtleties of finance and probably believed that the trustees had stolen her £500. It is also more than likely that Hannah More pushed her patronage too far and inspired a spirit of rebellion in Lactilla. — H.P.

² Anna braved every discomfort in order to see Mrs. Siddons act. After her visit to London in 1785 she wrote to Dr. Whalley: 'Most people quitted their coaches, we amongst the rest, and struggled for admission through columns of fine people, fierce and violent as the *canaille* when the Siddons plays.' She may have modelled her own readings on the performances of the great actress, for people frequently told her that she resembled them in Mrs. Siddons. — H.P.

to address in hours like these, when my mind is, as the subsiding sea, still trembling from the storm.

You are aware by how slight a thread the life of my aged nursling has been long suspended. His drop into the grave is an event which, I fear, will baffle my resolution to sustain with the cheerful resignation which reason and religion dictate. That entire dependence upon my care and attention, resulting from the decay of his corporeal and intellectual faculties, has doubled our bond of union, and engrafted the maternal upon filial tenderness. He seems at once my parent and my child; nor shall I suffer less, perhaps even more, from the loss of him, than if he had died while power, and authority, and exertion were in his hands.

He had been several weeks exempt from those sudden seizures of apparently mortal torpidity, which often put his existence into the extremest peril. Last Sunday morning, I was roused from my slumbers, between seven and eight, by these alarming words from my servant: 'Madam, my master is very ill. He was seized, a few minutes ago, in a different way from what he used to be, with a dreadful fit. You had better not go to him. We have sent for Dr. Jones.'

You will suppose I was not to be restrained from a sight which, God knows, I was not able to endure without agony. That dear feeble frame, and venerable face, which I had often seen sunk in the stupor of apoplectic palsy, torn and distorted by convulsive and apparently agonised struggles!

Ere I had been ten minutes in the room, his physician entered, and pronounced the seizure epileptic. He said he should bleed him copiously, not with the least hope that he could now be rescued from death; but to prevent the continuance of the fits, and render his expiring moments calm and easy; adding, he has not strength to bear the loss of blood, which is neces-

sary to subdue these convulsed struggles; but if not subdued, they would be inevitably fatal.

The loss of blood *did* subdue the fits, of which he had no return; but sunk into cold, damp, and, in appearance, deadly slumber. The physician said he would pass away in those slumbers; and assured me that he had little more to suffer.

I asked why it might not be hoped that he, who had survived apoplexy and palsy so often, might survive this new and more terrible attack? It was replied, that when epilepsy seizes, after a succession of other dangerous diseases, and after years of previous debility, there had been scarce an instance where it had not been speedily fatal; that it would, however, be right to make every effort to save while breath remained; that a coffee-cup of madeira should be poured down his throat every half hour, the capability of swallowing being lost; that nothing more could be done; that medicine was useless; that he might expire in a few minutes, or might continue some hours; but I was intreated not to entertain a certainly fallacious hope. Dr. Jones added, 'I am obliged to go out of town directly, nor can I be of any farther use.'

Alas! what a day of desponding anguish did I pass by his bed-side! that bed, on which he lay stretched out, his legs, and feet, and hands, icy cold; his eyes closed; – the damp of death on his sunk temples; – a breathing corpse! – but he had no struggles; that was some comfort. The wine we punctually administered each half hour, without his seeming sensible of its being poured down. I expected every breath would be his last. In this state he remained from the time of his being bled, between eight and nine in the morning, till two hours after midnight.

Totally exhausted by the ceaseless tears I had shed, I was persuaded by my servants to go to bed, upon their promise of giving the wine at the appointed intervals.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

With all the sorrow which, I think, filial affection knows to feel, I took what I believed my everlasting leave—kissing repeatedly his cold lips and hands. Assured by every body around me, that he could not live till day-break, I bid them avoid coming to me till I rime—and desired that when they saw me, I might learn the event rather from their silence, than their word.

So many tears weeping produced a friendly stupor on preme my pillow—I fell into an heavy desponding slumber, not awake till the clock struck six. Then, with a deep sense of woe, did I open my swollen eye-lids. Darkness and silence were around me—and the sense of deprivation—laid heavy on my heart. 'Never more!' said I aloud, never more.

During an whole hour I had not resolution to ring my bell for the fatal information. At length, and without any summons, I heard the sound of quick steps approaching my door. 'Strange thought I, and unfeeling speed!' they have surely forgotten my injunctions. I lifted the drop-bolt, 'Madam, my master is alive, and much better—he has spoken—he has asked for you, and for his breakfast.'

Up I started, and, huddling on a slight covering, hastened down to his apartment, my heart bounding to my very throat. 'O Friend,

'Not thro' the arch so hurries the blown tide
As I, recomforted, did pass that door.'

The door, which I never expected to open with the gladness of filial hope. - Yes, I beheld that beloved father, sitting nearly upright in his bed, supported by a back-chair, his eyes open, and a portion of intelligence, with a look of tender affection, lighting them up once more.

'My dear Nancy,' said he, in a faint voice, 'I am glad

you are come to give me my breakfast. I feel hungry.' O! what tears of transport did I pour on that extended hand, once more warm with life! with what unutterable delight did I lift the tea, and bits of toast to his lips!

When he had eaten his breakfast with liking and appetite, and was laid down again to dose, I learnt the particulars of this miraculous revival. His attendants said that he remained, in the state in which I left him, till between five and six, when, on giving him the wine, they perceived he swallowed it, though without moving his limbs, or opening his eyes. On repeating it, the next half hour, he expressed unwillingness to take it, and, lifting up his hand, tried to push it from him. However, they persuaded, or rather half-forced him to take it. On the next attempt of that sort he opened his eyes, and said, with tolerable distinctness, 'No, no, not wine - tea, and bread and butter;' - but they now, without attempting force, persuaded him to drink the wine, assuring him that he should have his breakfast the instant it could be procured. One of them ran up in that moment to impart the glad tidings to me.

He has continued slowly to amend from that time. His appetite is returned, and he sits up some hours every day in his arm-chair, and can converse a little himself, with some wanderings, that shew impaired memory rather than deranged intellect. He attends with pleasure to what we say, and read, to amuse him. I am happier than I can express, though it is an apprehensive and tremulous delight.

But my friend, what a resurrection at seventy-eight! Dr. Jones is astonished, and says he shall never again despair while he sees a patient respire.

My thankfulness to that heaven, which has thus restored to my fond cares their thrice dear object, is boundless. O! that it may long be mine to screen his helpless age from every want, and every annoyance!

Miss WESTON,

Lichfield, March 20, 1787.

Respondent to your kind inquiries, I have the pleasure to tell you, that my dearest father, though weaker than ever in his limbs, and amidst the fast-fading powers of memory, has had no relapse since his dreadful epileptic seizures in December, while his affection for me seems to increase as the other energies of his mind subside. When I administer his food, his wine, and even his medicines, which indeed are few, cordial and palatable, he looks at me with ineffable tenderness, and with an emphatic, though weak voice, 'thank you, my dear child, my darling, my blessing;' and not seldom he calls me 'the light of his eyes'. The sensations of melting fondness which such expressions awaken in my bosom, are of unutterable pleasure. But, alas! soon or late, we generally pay an high price for whatever has been cordial to our spirits, and sweet to our hearts. This augmented tenderness, from a parent always affectionate, O! how will it embitter the parting hour, which I must consider as perpetually impending!

Mrs. COTTON,

Lichfield, March 23, 1787.

I have this morning seen a very old acquaintance, unbeheld since my thirteenth year. I believe you know him: that shadow of a shade, Sir G. C. His figure is not an atom more formidable than in those my heedless and very youthful years, when, about seven years older than myself, the sight of him, and his tiny brother, dispersed my father's apprehensions about my accepting their mother's invitation to pass a month with her at the old family seat at B—n; -- apprehensions, which had arisen from her odd declaration, that she hoped her sons would be men of gallantry and

intrigue. 'Ah, ha!' said my father, seeing them alight with their mamma from the coach, 'what have we here? these Coldbrands the giants! these same mighty men! – In the name of chastity let the girl go. If she can be in danger from such heroes, she must be infinitely too seducible to escape by any possible restraints parental prudence can impose.' I, who had been educated in the strictest temperance of diet, and who had run about the fields in the bounding vigour of health, and with the gay hopes of dawning womanhood, was yet charmed with the novel ideas of B—n luxuries, and of bowling thither in a coach and four with two out-riders. Deuce take my Eveish desire of rambling from my pleasant home, and healthy deprivations. Mrs. C—n fed me up in that fatal month, like a porket, with chocolate, drank in bed at eight; a nap till ten; tea and hot-rolls at eleven; pease soup at one; a luxurious dinner at four; and an hot and splendid supper at midnight – the day-light intervals filled up with slow airings in the old coach, along the dusty roads, for it was in the heats of a blazing summer; and with lying on a couch, picking honesty for madam's flower-pots, without any danger of molestation from her puny sons. I wanted to read to her: 'No child, I detest reading.' – I begged permission to walk about the gardens; no, that would spoil my complexion; – to pursue my needle-work in her presence; no, that was vulgar. You will imagine how soon I sickened of the joyless luxury, and unsocial grandeur, for they visited but little with the neighbouring families, who were too rational to please, or be pleased with the fine town-lady, who professed to think the months of country-residence worse than annihilation – Alas! my month of vegetation was pledged, and during its oppressive progress, the change of diet, and total want of exercise, gave my constitution its first propensity to plumpness, which, to my

regret, no future temperance, or resumed activity, could subdue. – Till this luckless excursion I was light as a wood-nymph. The very many intervening years, and the change of effeminate youth into more decrepitude than usually appears in middle life, had not so obliterated the remembered traces of that pale and pen-knife face, that shadowy form, which 'the blasts of January must blow through and through,' but that I instantly knew Sir George C. If he is not more corporally consequential than he was at twenty, he is much more interesting. His manners are those of fashionable life; his language fluent, and correct; and his even affectionate recognisance of our youthful acquaintance, slight as it had been, seemed to spring from a warmth of heart more valuable than exterior grace.

I remembered nothing of these agremens about the Master Marmoset of B--n. That long commerce with the world should give ease to the address, and readiness to the conversational powers, is nothing rare, but sensibility and cordial ingenuousness, are not presents that time generally makes: Yet I see no reason why it should not. Sickness, disappointment, the tombs of our friends rising around us! – all these things have a natural tendency to soften the heart, and to expand its affections. Why they so commonly produce a contrary effect surpasses my philosophy to trace.

CAPTAIN SEWARD,

Lichfield, Sept. 2, 1787.

Yes, my dear Sir, I have been honoured with a visit from your truly great General,¹

'With all his full-blown honours thick upon him.'

¹ General George Augustus Elliott, 1717–90, was at one time aide-de-camp to George II. and as Colonel of the 1st Light Horse distinguished himself in Germany during the Seven Years War. Though a vegetarian

The blended dignity, and kindness of his manners, perfectly answered the idea I had formed of the noble Elliot from your and Mr. Vernon's description, super-added to that of public report.

You excited the flattering hope of his staying a few days with me. Could that have been fulfilled, – nay, had he passed only one night in Lichfield, the compliment of a general illumination through our little city had been paid. The words Elliot, Gibraltar, Victory, enwreathed with flowers, were to have shone in phosphorus upon the walls of our town-hall, and over the arms of the city. It was the contrivance of an ingenious young surgeon, of the name of Green, who prepared it when you taught me to expect one of the most flattering distinctions of my life; but arriving on a Sunday morning, and departing in the afternoon, he frustrated the wish of our inhabitants to have welcomed with public eclat, the restorer of the nation's glory.

Captain Cayleur and Mr. Vernon accompanied his lordship. The former is a graceful young gentleman, strongly resembling the brave unfortunate André.

It gives me pleasure that my neighbour, Mr. Vernon, stands so high in Lord Heathfield's esteem. He has considerable talents and exertion; and the warm, and entirely voluntary praise of so great and good a man, proves that they have been, at least of late years, directed to noble purposes.

Nor did Lord H. wait for my intended mention of

and water-drinker himself, he looked after the comfort and wellbeing of his troops and was extremely popular, his regiment being regarded as a model in the army. With the prize-money he obtained during an expedition to Cuba, he bought an estate at Heathfield. In 1775, at the outbreak of the war with America, he was made governor of Gibraltar, his heroic defence of that Rock against Spain lasting from June, 1779, till February, 1783. Returning to England in 1787, he was created Baron Heathfield of Gibraltar. – H.P.

THE SWAN OF ICHFIELD

you. We had not been ten minutes together before he entered upon a theme so agreeable, declaring his high opinion of your professional merit, of your domestic virtues; adding, 'his wife will be a happy woman, and she deserves him.'

My father had not sufficiently recovered from a recent epileptic fit for me to venture introducing him to my noble guest. Greatly was I disappointed that he could not have the happiness of paying his respects to one, whose name he always mentions with a tear glistening in his dear eyes.

I had presented all my publications to Lord Heathfield, elegantly bound. He would not suffer his aide-de-camp to carry the book to the inn, but held it in his own hand, as he walked through our streets. I know your friendship will take a lively interest in these little circumstances, which do me so much honour.

MR. W. NEWTON, THE PEAK MINSTREL,
Lichfield, Sept. 26, 1787.

Have you seen the poems of the Scotch peasant Burns? They abound with the irregular fires of genius whenever they describe rural scenery, or the customs and characters of village-life. We find that he has looked at Nature, in her wild and rustic operations, with his own eyes, and he is particularly happy in his winter landscapes. But when he grows sentimental he has little that is new, and his plagiarisms are notorious. There is great originality in the allegoric ode which personifies a Caledonian muse; but he says there was about her

'A hair-brain'd sentimental trace.'

The line is specked as a quotation. How a sentimental trace should be hair-brained, which means wild, giddy, unthinking, there can be no guess.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

GEORGE HARDINGE, ESQ.,

Lichfield, Oct. 1, 1787.

When I was at Ludlow in June last, a party of eight conducted me one bright summer's day, into the recesses of Mr. Knight's romantic, his, in my eyes, matchless valley.

We obtained permission to eat our cold meat, and drink our wine and water in the lower apartment of the mill-house, furnished in all rustic elegance. The windows look immediately upon the river, that brawls along its craggy channel at the feet of those high and sylvan rocks, which, circling round the glen, and shutting out every other prospect, make the lovely solitude a very Juan-Fernandez. I should have liked to have met you in this secluded dell, and there introduced you to our party. Surely the years which have passed away since our only and transient personal interview, have not been so oblivious, but we should have known each other. Why do you think me cold to the idea of meeting you? You have no reason for such a suspicion, unless you put that odd construction upon my desire that you should bring your wife with you.

A little more about this same party of ours to Downton. One of the nymphs that formed it, contributed, by an happy frolic, to make us fancy ourselves in one of the beautiful wilds of the southern latitudes.

She has immense animal spirits, and at times a great deal of genuine archness. Her sprightliness, and the command of her father's horses and servants, make her an inevitable ingredient in all the Ludlow parties of excursion. She is brunette, almost to swarthinness; and, though her features are not disagreeable, there are the thick lips, and the large, dark, heavy eyes of the torrid zone. She had, that day, no powder in her

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

sable locks, from which the heat and riding on Horse-back, had taken every degree of curl.

In another seclusion, romantic as that of the mill, and more absolute, since it contained no trace of human habitation, or even foot step, the valley again widening into a circular glen we sat down, beneath one of the surrounding rocks to shelter ourselves from the sun-beam.

Whether the deer mark ever the nymph of making the scene so perfectly Otahite, I know not, but she ran to the river-brink, threw off her riding-hat, and putting her hair on a black band down the sides of her face, danced to her own purely dissonant singing, in a sort of antipodean, and became the very figure we had represented in Cook's *Voyages*. We were all seized with the same idea, and exclaimed to each other, what a complete little Savage we are certainly in Otahite!

REV. J. S. WHALLEY

Lichfield, Oct. 6, 1787.

Mrs. Piozzi completely answer your description; her conversation is that bright wine of the intellects which has no lees.

Your letter, that was to have introduced us to each other, did not reach me till three days after she and Mr. Piozzi had left Lichfield. Dr. Falconer obligingly called to tell me that she was in our city. I had my doubts whether an unIntroduced visit might not be thought a liberty. While I was balancing the idea, Mr. Parker came in and laughd me out of the scruple.

I shall always feel indebted to him for eight or nine radiant hours of Mr. and Mrs. Piozzi's society. They passed one evening here, and I the next with them at their inn.

My cousin, Mr. H. White, whom Dr. Johnson once called 'the rising strength of Lichfield', and who, when

perfectly awake from an intellectual torpor, which is apt to overcloud him, is very ingenious; and when he rubs his eyes, and looks, has very distinct perceptions of genius in others; – our nabob of lively records, and his relation, Colonel Barry of Worcester, whose military exertions have had eclat; who, in early youth, succeeded the unfortune André in an admiring passion for Honora Sneyd; and, after his sad fate, succeeded that gallant officer in his appointments in America; who has studied politeness from Chesterfield, poetry after our best critics, and moral philosophy and style after Johnson; – these personages met your friends at my little supper. The evening was Attic.

Mr. Saville being last week at Birmingham oratorios, I could not have the pleasure of introducing him to Mr. and Mrs. Piozzi; but, as they desired me to bring any of my friends in the afternoon, I took his timid Philomela in my hand. Never had Mr. Piozzi two beings of his audience who were more charmed with his perfect expression on his instrument, and with the touching and ever-varying grace with which he sings. Surely the finest sensibilities must vibrate through his frame, since they breathe so sweetly through his song, though his imperfect knowledge of our language prevents their appearing in conversation. I am sure he values, as he ought, the honour and happiness he has obtained, of which the elegances of wealth, and the blessings of independence, form the smallest part. He seemed much pleased with Mrs. Smith's¹ voice, and the melting sweetness of her manner in singing, amidst all the disadvantages of her timidity.

WM. HAYLEY, ESQ.,

Lichfield, Oct. 6, 1787.

I am become acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Piozzi.

¹ This Mrs. Smith was the daughter of John Saville, who had trained her for the concert hall. – H. P.

Dr. Johnson told me truth when he said she had more colloquial wit than most of our literary women. It is indeed a fountain of perpetual flow, but he did not tell me truth when he asserted that Piozzi was an ugly dog, without particular skill in his profession. Mr. Piozzi is an handsome man, in middle life, with gentle, pleasing, and unaffected manners, and with very eminent skill in his profession. Though he has not a powerful or fine-tuned voice, he sings with transcending grace and expression.

CAPTAIN SEWARD.

Dec. 7, 1787.

Is it possible that Lord Heathfield should not see the impropriety of my presuming to intrude upon the Duke of Richmond's attention with an interference, by request, in military promotions, since I can scarcely be said to have the shadow of a personal acquaintance with his Grace?

My father's present state, the almost utter loss of all his intellectual faculties, is known. Did he possess them, impertinent surely would be an acknowledgment from him, that he supposed the Duke meant anything more than a polite compliment, by giving the name of obligation to the civility of ordering our servants to make up a bed for him during three nights, and to prepare a bason of gruel for him in the morning, before he went to the field. This was literally all he could be prevailed upon to accept beneath this roof, when in his years of bloom, he united the occupation of Mars to the form of Adonis. I was then a green 'girl, something between the woman and the child,' nor have I ever since beheld the Duke of Richmond. Though I so perfectly remember *him*, it is more than probable that he remembers not me; and it would be more than impertinent to presume that I could have interest with him.

As to incurring obligations, I should be very glad thus to incur them from the Duke for your advantage; – but observation, and indeed the revolt I have always myself felt from officious recommendation, invariably proved to me that it injures instead of promoting the interests of the recommended. His Grace would certainly be disgusted by my seeming to suppose that any mention I could make of a relation, or friend, could operate in their favour. Disgust has a withering influence upon patronage. What is it I could say, that has a shadow of probability to enhance the Duke's good opinion of a *military* man? – that man already recommended to him by Lord Heathfield the greatest General existing, whose praise ought to be the passport to martial honours and emolument. An attempt of this sort from me would be just as likely to be of use, as if, had I been in Gibraltar during the siege, and when our artillery was pouring on the enemy, I had thrown a bonfire-squib into the mouth of a forty-pounder to assist the force of the explosion.

And, lest it should be apprehended that my poetic reputation might give some degree of consequence to my request, Mr. Hayley, who is the Duke's near neighbour, has told me that his Grace had no fondness for works of imagination. The race of Mæcenas is extinct in this period.

When my dear father was in his better days, he lived on terms of intercourse and intimacy with the Marquis of Stafford. Lord Sandwich and my father, in their mutual youth, had been on the Continent together, with the affection of brothers. On my publishing the *Monody on André*, he desired me to present one to each of these Lords, expressing an assured belief that the work of an old friend's daughter would not be unacceptable.

I, who ever thought that men of rank have seldom any taste for intellectual exertion, which serves

not some purpose of their own interest; and feeling an invincible repugnance to paying attentions, which are likely to be repulsed with rude neglect, strongly, warmly, and even with a few proud tears, expostulated against the intrusion. My father never knew that great world, with which, in his youth, he had much intercourse. Frank, unassuming, inattentive to those nice shades of manner, those effects, resulting from trivial circumstances, which develop the human heart, he judged of other by his own unvarnished disposition. Benevolent, infinitely good-natured, and incapable of treating his inferior with neglect, he thought every kindness, every civility he received, sincere, every slight shewn either to himself, or others, accidental.

Thus he would persist in the idea that these Lords would be gratified by such a mark of attention to them; and that I should receive their thanks. I, who had been so much less in their society, knew them better; that such little great men are as capable of impoliteness as they are incapable of taste for the arts; - but my obedience was insisted upon.

One condition, however, I made, that, if they should not have the good manners to write, 'I thank you, Madam, for your poem,' he would never more request me to obtrude my compositions upon titled insolence. They had not the civility to make the least acknowledgment.

My heart (I own it is in some respects a proud one) swelled with indignation; not at the neglect, for I felt it beneath my attention, and had expected it, but because I had been obliged to give them reason to believe that I desired their notice.

My life against sixpence, the Duke of Richmond would receive a letter from me in the same manner. Ah! a soul like Lord Heathfield's, attentive to intellectual exertions in the closet of the studious, as in the field of honour, and generous enough to encourage,

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

and throw around it the lustre of his notice, is even more rare than his valour, and military skill. I wish his Lordship to see this letter. It will explain to him the nature of those convictions, and of those feelings, which must be powerful indeed, ere I could hesitate a moment to follow his advice, though but insinuated on any subject. My devoted respects and good wishes are his, as they are your's, not periodically, but constantly.

MISS HELEN WILLIAMS,

Lichfield, Dec. 25, 1787.

You will easily procure from Mr. Whalley an introduction to Mrs. Piozzi. It will delight you to hear with what energy she speaks of her Egyptian bondage to the arbitrary despot. Scarcely was it less severe for having been voluntary. What a recompense did the ingrate make her after her marriage, for the devotion of her fortune, her health, her peace, to prevent every want, every wish of his! To a benevolent and cheerful temper like hers, most oppressive must have been his habitual malignancy, when resident under her roof. Perhaps she knows not the opprobrious terms in which he abused her for a connection, which, however it might lessen her consequence with the world, was clear from every stain of criminality towards God and towards man. He spoke of her in company here, as a being without veracity, or worth of any kind; even she, Mrs. Thrale! whom he tells, in his letters to her, after many year's intimacy, and daily intercourse, 'that to hear her was to hear wisdom; to see her was to see virtue!'

MRS. PIOZZI, on her Publication of JOHNSON'S Letters.

Lichfield, March 7, 1788.

Nothing is less to be trusted than the fidelity of

Doctor Johnson's pen, when he aims to be characteristic. How different from what she really was must posterity conceive of his daughter-in-law, Lucy Porter, from the following sentence in the letters: 'Miss Lucy has raised my esteem by many excellencies, very noble and replegent, though a little discoloured by hoary virginity.'

It did the cleverest appellative suit her downright homely, robust, if ever expansive into generosity, her illiterate, crowded, and cherished vulgarity. Hoary virginity may partly be said to discolour personal grace. But the *hoary* never passed beyond the result of a round face, with tolerably pretty features, though in the 'huckle's blankness' of flaxen hair and eye-brows, and a clean fair skin. The *virgin*, I am told, were the sum total of her charms in the years of bloom, and that her figure had never had any elegance. If beauty of face, and grace of form had ever been hers, they are not properties to raise esteem, while, over the splendour and nobleness of intellectual qualities, the hoary virginity of fifty-two could not well have cast any dimness.

I have a consciousness of obligation to you, my dear Madam, on the ground of this publication,¹ besides the kindness, which makes it a token of your amity. I always visited, and received visits from Doctor Johnson, on every residence of his in our town, excepting only the few days in which you were here with him. A shyness between Mrs. Lucy Porter and myself, the only estrangement that ever happened between us, and which had no continuance, unfortunately for me, existed at that period, depriving me of the desired pleasure of waiting upon you.

Greatly as I admired Johnson's talents, and revered his knowledge, and formidable as I felt the powers to be of his witty sophistry, yet did a certain quickness of

¹ Johnson's letters to Mrs. Thrale.

spirit, and zeal for the reputation of my favourite authors, irresistibly urge me to defend them against his spleenful injustice: — a temerity, which I was well aware made him dislike me, notwithstanding the coaxing regard he always expressed for me on his first salutations on returning to Lichfield. The breath of opposition soon used to collect the dark clouds on his horizon,

‘Who sat to give his little senate laws.’

Since I see so many Lichfield people mentioned in these letters, whose visits were not much more frequent than mine, and whose talents had no sort of claim to lettered attention, there can be no great vanity in believing that he would not pass me over in total silence. Therefore is it that I thank you for your suppressions. I must have been pained by the consciousness of going down to posterity with the envenomed arrows of Johnson’s malevolence sticking about me; though I am well aware, from the recording spirit of his less benevolent biographers, that it is the fate of numbers to bear them, whose virtues and abilities are superior to mine.

I cannot imagine what anonymous poem it could be, which it appears, from these letters, that he was solicited to read on one of his visits to Lichfield in 1781. Not a creature among the number of his visitors, whom he mentions, are capable of being enough interested about any poetic effort to have requested his attention to it. I never shewed him, or asked his opinion about a single line of mine, either in print or manuscript, nor of any unpublished work of others. To me he almost invariably spoke with strong dislike of all our celebrated female writers, except yourself. As I so carefully avoided all conversation that could lead to the subject of my compositions, it was the only way he

had of imparting that mortification to my literary self-love, which it was the fast-roy of his gloomy spirit to impart to every person, at time.

That any man in being, male or female, could endeavour to draw Johnson's attention to their own writings, is to me inconceivable. How little insight into character had they who made the rich, the vain attempt have possessed!

Once, however, perhaps as a reward for the unobtrusive disposition of my name, he paid an high compliment in my presence to my Essay on Cook. He was speaking favourably of the *Columbia* of Madame Bougainville, and added, 'He describes many thing well, but nothing so well as you have described the seas, and shores, round the South Pole.' I blushed, curtsied, and instantly turned the conversation into a different channel.

Another time, when I was not present, he spoke very handsomely indeed of my writings, in a large company at Mrs. Porter's; but that was because his opinion about them was asked with an air and manner which unmasked to his penetration the motive of the inquiry; and he scorned to become subservient to other people's malice. I could have taught my enemies how to have obtained from Johnson that contempt of my compositions, which, for the power of repeating, their ill-will was on fire; - but it must have been effected by shrewder management than they were up to.

Mrs Piozzi,

Lichfield, March 13, 1788.

So Mr. R--- is affronted not to find his name in your growler's letters. Astonishing, that any being, who knew Dr. Johnson, should not have been thankful for such exemption! When he was last in Lichfield, he told me that a lady in London once sent him a poem which she had written, and afterwards desired to know

his opinion of it. 'Madam, I have not cut the leaves, I did not even peep between them. I met her again in company, and she again asked me after the trash. I made no reply, and began talking to another person. The next time we met, she asked me if I had yet read her poem; I answered, no, Madam, nor ever intend it.'

Shocked at the unfeeling rudeness he thus recorded of himself, I replied, that I was surprised any person should obtrude their writings upon his attention; adding, that if I could write as well as Milton, or Gray, I should think the best fate to be desired for my compositions was exemption from his notice. I expected a sharp sarcasm in return, but he only rolled his large head in silence.

If the spirits of our noblest bards yet retain any solicitude for their earthly fame, either as poets or as men, they perhaps would like to have met the fate of Mr. R—. I remain, dear Madam, yours, &c.

MRS. COTTON,

Lichfield, March 17, 1788.

It is peculiarly proper that I should condole with you on the loss of your friend this day — for it is the 17th of March; the birth-day of my lovely long-deceased sister, who died in her nineteenth year — 'a fair flower soon cut down on our fields. The spring returned with its showers, but no leaf of her's arose?' — yet does not my heart forget this day, which gave to life an amiable creature, who shed the light of joy over many of my youthful years. Many are fled since she vanished from earth. Time balm's sorrow, and there is a joy in grief when the soul is at peace. But I am conscious there are deprivations, the wound of which no time can balm. Then it is that anguish wastes the mournful, and their days are few. Heaven preserve my heart, and the hearts of all I love, from the corrosive impression of such a woe!

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

Here is nothing to be called news which can interest you. Some of us are grown very fine. The 's and 's, whom you remember contentedly moving in general equality with their neighbours, have, amidst their, of late year, improving fortunes, taken great state upon themselves, affect to live in what they call style, to associate chiefly with Lord- and Equites of high degree in the civison. They think, no doubt, that thus externally elevating themselves, they shall excite the envy of their neighbours, that darling triumph of contracted mind. They certainly do excite it amongst the many who would act the same part if they had the same golden means. But there are two classes of people who look down upon such low-souled ambition, and all its ill ostentations; -- the religious, and the literary. Earthly parade can draw no jealous glances from eyes that are often lifted up to Heaven; and the votaries of intellectual and lettered pleasures, look upon their lacques and lords, their strutting and their style, with as undazzled and untroubled eyes as eagles can be supposed to cast on glow-worms, when they have been recently gazing on the sun.

WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq.,

Lichfield, April 17, 1788.

We have here two young poets, one the second son of a gentleman of family, and of the name of Lister, lately settled in this city, the other of an officer, called Cary, living at Sutton Coldfield. Their age equal, just turned fifteen, their attachment and delight in each other generously enthusiastic.

They received their last three years' instruction from an ingenious schoolmaster at Sutton; though Cary is now removed to Birmingham school, previous to his going to the university. Lister, on account of an unfortunate hesitation in his speech; which forbids the

pursuit of an oratoric profession, is placed with our eminent banker, Mr. Cobb. They have pursued their studies with emulative ardour, and after having, for some time past, amused themselves, in the recesses of the school-hours, with translating Moschus, Bion, and Horace, into English verse, they now write original odes, and also sonnets, upon the Miltonic model; and with success that is quite miraculous in years so blossoming.

If you looked into the last *Gentleman's Magazine*, you saw a sonnet of Cary's addressed to yourself. Lister writes very sweetly for such a youth, but I think Cary's vein the richer. I enclose specimens of each.¹

MRS. KNOWLES,

Lichfield, April 20, 1788.

And now, what say you to the last publication of your other sister-wit, Mrs. Piozzi? It is well that she has had the good nature to extract almost all the corrosive particles from the old growler's letters.

By means of her benevolent chemistry, these effusions of that expansive, but gloomy spirit, taste more oily and sweet than one could have imagined possible. To my taste, however, that sweetness is mawkishly luscious. A general vapidness pervades his coaxing, which proves how little it was the natural language of an heart, which seems, at its very creation, to have been steeped in surliness.

But love is the great softener of savage dispositions. Johnson had always a metaphysic passion for one

¹ Thomas Lister, whose family lived at Armitage Park, Lichfield, formed an 'undying friendship' at school with Henry Francis Cary. Lister became a barrister, Cary a clergyman. After his father's death Lister dropped the law, settled down at Armitage Park, and produced a son, Thomas Henry Lister, who made a reputation as a writer with his novel *Granby*. Cary became famous as the translator of *Dante*. The 'undying friendship' between the two died a natural death when one was sent to Oxford and the other to Cambridge. — H.P.

princess or other. First the rich Lucy Porter, before he married her, and then another one, the handsome but haughty Melis Astor, and next the abominated, methodistic Mr. Beechey, who read her Bible in Hebrew, and lastly, the new religion, as Mrs. Thrale with the beauty, the talents, the learning of the second, and with the reputation of a beautiful character and such a son.

It is true that she was a very good elephant forsaking her old religion for a new one.

'To make them not have all her right and wreath
His mighty form depopulate.'

This last and long-enduring passion for Mrs. Thrale was, however, composed equally perhaps of cupboard-love, Platonic love, and vanity tickled and gratified from morn to night by incessant homage. The two first ingredients are certainly oddly heterogeneous; but Johnson, in religion and politics, in love and in hatred, in truth and falsehood, was composed of such opposite and contradictory materials as never before met in the human mind. This is the reason why folk are never weary of talking, reading, and writing about a man.

'So various, that he seem'd to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome.'

Who yearned after a Scottish king, yet detested the Scottish nation; who worshipped the monarchical claims and despised the parental ones; who, hating dissenters of all denominations, held up the writings of Clarke and the life of Watts as models of perfection; who has declared, in his *Rasselas*, that to write poetry well is the consummate perfection of human intellect; yet speaks, in his *Lives of the Poets*, with contempt of almost every individual who has excelled in that art;

who rejected, as infamous, the most prudent and necessary evasions in matters of fact; yet scrupled not to deny things he knew to be true, if they made for the honour of others, who gave his goods to feed the poor, yet burnt towards reputation in the lust of hatred; and, finally, who worshipped God as Indians worship the devil.

I dare say you think with me, that the princess's letters are very superior to those of her preceptor, except the letters from Scotland; where, getting off his knees, he walks tall, and is himself, often his *best* self. He is himself also, his *worst* detestable self, in the instance of his envy recorded in the supplementary observations at the close of the correspondence – when he opposed D. Garrick's admission into the literary club, threatened to black-ball him, and, in an infamously reflecting couplet, classes his old friend, the companion of his youth, his fellow-voyager in the untried depths of fortune-making; a man so generally respected, originally so much his superior in birth and station, ranks him with gamesters and pimps! ! – while, with hypocritic cant, he seeks to veil this rancour, by professing personal esteem for his little Davy, as he called him. Then, what right had a man, who wrote a play for the stage, to avow contempt for the theatric profession?

You have marked his kindness to his native city, in the intellectual night with which he has overwhelmed her:

'Thy hand, great Anarch, lets the curtain fall,
And universal darkness covers all.'

I feel myself indebted to Mrs. Piozzi for escaping a more peculiar destiny than that of being enveloped in the general fog. Chafing him, as I used to do, like a hunted boar at bay, with my praises of other writers,

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

I always knew he hated me in spite of his coaxing epithets.

WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.,

Lichfield, June 1, 1788.

I scarce know how to . . . express our gratitude for your having persuaded Romney to gratify my father, by his possessing, ere he dies, the promised treasure.¹ It arrived late last night; rich, adorned, and invaluable, by the Romneyan powers. My poor invalid was fast asleep in his bed — Lister and Cary, our young bards, were supping with me. They were on fire with curiosity, while the nails were drawing, and highly gratified with contemplating the most masterly portrait their young eyes had ever beheld. I placed it by my father's bed-side at seven this morn. — He wept with joy when I undrew the curtain — wanted to kiss it, and has talked and looked at it all day. I send some verses to Romney, by this post, which but ill express my gratitude.

REV. — BERWICK,

Lichfield, Oct. 6, 1788.

Your friend Mr. — tells me he suspects Mrs. Piozzi gave Johnson's letters to the world that they might form a decent vehicle for the publication of her own. It appears to me, that the natural desire of letting the world know how highly she was esteemed by a person so distinguished, — how constantly, during so many years, she engaged his revering attention, was the master-spring of that publication. If she had chosen to have printed her own letters, I cannot think she needed any excuse — any vehicle for introducing them to the public. There is no greater vanity in publishing one's letters, than one's essays or poems. You say you like no letters but Swift's: Surely, my dear Sir, there

¹ Romney's portrait of Anne Howard.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

is more than one beautiful style of letters. Swift's are pleasant in the humorous chit-chat way. Those, however, please me better

.... 'That steer,
From grave to gay, from lively to severe.'

Why should not genius expand in private letters; describe scenery with the glow of the painter; characters with the fire of the dramatist; moralise with the dignity of the philosopher; and sometimes, under the pressure of sorrow, court 'Fancy as the friend of woe?' Why, in short, should any charming efflorescence of the imagination be banished from the page which is designed for the eye of friendship? – and why should our style be eloquent only when we are writing to the world?

MISS HELEN WILLIAMS,

Lichfield, Oct. 19, 1788.

It is only for one eight days that I have ventured to leave my father, since I wrote to you last. A rich festival of oratorio music allured me to Sheffield. A rich road lay over the wild hills, and through the luxuriant vales of my native Derbyshire. The pleasures I feel from the contemplation of romantic scenery, is there always heightened by the patriot passion. Within a very little way of the village that gave me birth, and of which my dear father is rector, I could not pass it unvisited. But, alas! having never been there before without him, I felt a dreary and painful void as I roved through the unfurnished apartments of the lonely rectory, and saw the rank grass of the bowling-green waving in at the parlour windows. I went into the church and gazed on the vacant pulpit – ah! how that vacancy struck upon my heart!

I am glad you and Dr. M. like my Johnsonian

conversation. But Mrs. K. is curiously dissatisfied with that tract, because it does not record a long theologic dispute, which is needed to what I have put down, and in which she ably defeated the Quaker principles from the charge of deism and absurdity, which the Doctor brought against them. She forces that she appears in a poor eclipsed light in this great manuscript, because he there appears only more calm, and general reasoner, both of which she told her are against

Mrs. Pezard does not talk in the style in which you tell me to speak of your friend. She is herself a brilliant and accomplished being, whose praise is fame.

During the progress of the last letter, Mr. Boswell sent up, from one of our men, that he would breakfast with me to-morrow morning. He has so much wit, eloquence, and good humour, that it proves right pleasant to converse with him.

Mr. S. is engrossed by attendance upon at least two thousand rare plants and flowers, so that his friends lose many hours every week of his company; hours which they do not like to spare. But his fame as a botanic florist flies far. On the side of Johnson's favourite gigantic willow, and in the bosom of that pretty valley which slopes from the east end of our cathedral, lies his little garden. It is become one of the Lichfield lions which strangers go to see.

GEORGE HARDINGE, Esq.,

Lichfield, March 5, 1789.

On the 27th of last month I was honoured and blest by a two hours' personal conversation with the most distinguished excellence that ever walked the earth, since saints and angels left off paying us morning visits.

* Saville.

To say that his name is Howard¹ would be superfluous. This is the third time he has favoured me with his conversation on his way through this town. I am truly glad of our king's recovery, but yet I should not walk half so tall upon a visit from him. Mr. Howard presented me with his new publication, and had previously given me the former. This is enriched with beautiful engravings of the foreign Lazarettos. He sets out next spring, to encounter again the shafts that speed through the darkness, and 'the pestilence that walketh at noon-day', stimulated by the hope of being able to avert, in future, some of their mischiefs from the human race.

Last Friday evening was the 'Feast of Light' with us; I assure you every window shone, many with transparent paintings, whose emblems were well imagined, while loyal entwreathed thanksgivings glowed in phosphorus. Our corporation, our esquires, our choir, and our principal tradesmen, preceded by a band of music sung God Save the King through the streets. If our little city loved genius, science, and art, half as well as it loves its king, and his minister, our societies would be more animated than they are.

MISS WILLIAMS,

Lichfield, July 23, 1789.

I have mentioned to you how delighted, how fascinated, I was with Mrs. Piozzi's conversation. Her *Anecdotes of Johnson*, though animated and amusing, did not, by any means, appear to me on a level with those colloquial attractions; but with her letters in the *Johnsonian Collection* I was much pleased. To her *Travels through Italy* I sat down with avidity; with every presentiment in their favour that personal friendship, and the extreme pleasure you and Sophia

¹ John Howard, 1726-90, the famous prison reformer.

expressed in them, could improve. But never was I more surprised than to meet, from Mr. Plazzen, a style perplexed with the most intricate varieties of expressions I had ever seen. He is a young man, and by all appearances a perfect scholar. It is the Godefrid, more than any other, that has excited 'near hand' for near and far. It is not far by this time, but up for that, and not far for attempting to put a noble young man, for another out of an 'infinite' of 'artfullest,' for a certain number of 'the' the countless number of 'infinite' in 'the' the woman-like choice, and not to be 'the' the. When a Cheapside miss exclaims, 'O, how the beautiful man!' we smile and pity her want of education, but how can we suppress our indignation when genius, travelled knowledge, classical erudition, brilliant wit, and John on in pulpit, thus disgrace themselves! It seems an insult upon her reader, whom he often convinces of her ample power to have made the style as polished as the matter is interesting. And she often interweaves passages that are very finely written. What can she mean by the silly exclamation, so often intruding into the midst of her sentences, 'in good time?' Some cant phrase, I suppose, at which we should stare a little amid the slipshod privileges of confidential conversation.

With the never-ending profusion of kitchen-phrasology, we find stiff Latinisms, out of all common use, even with learned authors—and they agree as ill with the former, as the late fat Dowdness of Northumberland's heavy diamond ear-rings, trailing, as I remember to have seen them, when I was a girl, from her long ears, and short neck upon a dirty and coarse muslin handkerchief.

WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq.,

August 17, 1789

My dear friend, When you urged the necessity of an assiduously attentive friend and secretary to yourself, and an occasional preceptor to your darling, when indisposition or literary employment of another species should make it inconvenient to you to attend to him, I mentioned Mr. W. as a person I know to be every way qualified for those trusts. I fear it will not be easy to find another companion of your travels so eligible in either sex, especially in ours. France may, however, perhaps supply you with what I think England could not, an amiable and accomplished woman, who durst put her peace and fame into the hazard of living domestically, during some years, with the most dazzling and engaging of mankind. Nothing but a considerable independent fortune can enable an amiable female to look down, without misery, upon the censures of the many; and even in that situation, their arrows have power to wound, if not to destroy peace. Surely no woman, with a nice sense of honour, — and what is she worth who has it not? — would voluntarily expose herself to their aim, except she has unwarily *slid* into a situation where the affections, making silent and unperceived progress, have rendered it a less evil to endure the consciousness of a dubious fame, provided there is no real guilt, than to renounce the society of him, without whom creation seems a blank.

The contemptible rage for novel-reading, is a pernicious and deplorably prevalent taste, which vitiates and palls the appetite for literary food of a more nutritive and wholesome kind. It surprises me that superior genius stoops to feed this reigning folly, to administer sweet poison for the age's tooth; — and yet

when I find a work of that sort claiming, I feel inclined to pardon the countenance the publisher gives to a destructive propensity.

To the Editor of the GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE.

Oct. 11. 1789.

SIR—There is a little correction upon my account of the late Mr. Day of Antrim. His date, after paying £1000 to the poor to which he had generously annexed a valuable freehold per annum. He married the ingenious and amiable Mrs. Mills of Yorkshire whose fortune was twenty three thousand pounds.

In his death, the indulgent benevolence he showed have an unspeakable loss—but let him be spoken of as he was, for truth is better than indiscriminate eulogium.

Mr. Day, with very first rate abilities, was a splenetic, capricious, yet bountiful misanthropist. He bestowed nearly the whole of his ample fortune in relieving the necessities of the poor—frequently, however, declaring his conviction, that there were few in the large number he fed, who would not cut his throat the next hour, if their interest could prompt the act, and their lives be safe in its commission. He took pride in avowing his abhorrence of the luxuries, and disdain of even the decencies of life, and in his person, he was generally slovenly, even to squalidness. On being asked by one of his friends, why he chose the lonely and unpleasant situation in which he lived? He replied, that the sole reason of that choice was, its being out of the stink of human society.

It had been said, and I believe with truth, that he put a total stop to all correspondence between Mrs. Day and her large and respectable family-connections in Yorkshire, who had never ceased to regret so undeserved an instance of morose deprivation. She not

* Thomas Day (1748–89), author of *Sandford and Merton*.

only sacrificed her friends to gratify her husband's unsocial spleen, but all the comforts of that affluence to which she had been accustomed. Before this lady married our gloomy philosopher, her generosity had been eminently distinguished in the large social circle in which she moved. Society is the proper sphere of action for the benevolent virtues. It is the duty of those who possess such virtues to exert them there, that the influence of excellent example may not be lost upon mankind, through the inevitable disgust it must receive from voluntary seclusion, and avowed contempt.

I am, Sir, &c.

MR. CARY,

Dec. 19, 1789.

The ability to employ myself has been all this week annihilated, by a dreadful shock my spirits received in the sudden death of poor faithful old Thomas Reid, who nursed, and watched, and protected my dear helpless and 'child-changed' father. The awful and heart-affecting scene passed before these eyes, that had never beheld a human being expire. It has left an impression which will, I believe, never be effaced. Perfectly well, till the instant of his seizure on Sunday morning, from which moment he lived only three hours! The next Wednesday evening no vestige left of him upon earth! I have not words to express how much it affected me to hear him say, while he knew he was dying,—'Let my master (who was going to breakfast) have three dishes of tea.' The very last words he spoke were when my little dog sprung upon his knee, as he sat in the arm-chair, and ran up his breast, visibly alarmed, and soliciting, with her little foot, the attention of her dying bedfellow, 'O! poor Sappho! I can do no more for thee!'

Mr. Piozzi

Dec. 21

And now, Mr. Piozzi, I have to write a notice of Mr. Hurd's poem. I have not leisure for an answer to the letter which I have probably mistaken for one of your poetical satires, might else have written you a long one, but your encouragement will make me stick to the plan I set with more than usual resolution. I have not yet entered, and, if I have not, I am tempted not to enter, to pre-empt a conquest over all the competitors in the story—the recollection how well Joseph and Pharaoh's bones have been received, would freeze the Melpomenean ink in my standish.

Suffer me now to speak to you of your highly ingenious, instructive, and entertaining publication; yet shall it be with the sincerity of friendship, rather than with the flourish of compliment. No work of the sort I ever read possessed, in an equal degree, the power of placing the reader in the scenes, and amongst the people it describes. Wit, knowledge, and imagination illuminate its pages—but the infinite inequality of the style! permit me to acknowledge to you what I have acknowledged to others, that it excites my exhaustless wonder, that Mrs. Piozzi, the child of genius, the pupil of Johnson, should pollute, with the vulgarisms of unpolished conversation, her animated pages! that, while she frequently displays her power of commanding the most chaste and beautiful style imaginable, she should generally use those inelegant, those strange *dids*, and *does*, and *thoughts*, and *toos*, which produce jerking angles, and stop-short abruptness, fatal at once to the grace and ease of the sentence;—which are, in language, what the rusty black silk handkerchief and the brass ring are upon the beautiful form of the

Italian Countess she mentions, arrayed in embroidery and blazing in jewels.

Ah! madam, could I have thought that you would perpetually write, and commit to press, 'sure enough,' for *certainly*, – 'I tried at him,' for, *I tried to persuade him*, – 'he hit it,' for *he discovered* – with a large &c. of congenial and untranslatable expressions; especially as you observe, in your charming letters to Dr. Johnson, which are before the public, some much slighter inelegancies of this kind, in Addison's writings, and justly say that they are pardonable only from the graces and purity of style being less understood in his day than in ours. Upon the miracle of their descending from your pen, many of my literary acquaintance have written to me. How easily might you have removed – how well would it answer the trouble, of even yet, against future editions, removing these blemishes – these sullyng veins from your gems! Such polish, far from diminishing, would add to the grace and ease of the work. What can be more light, easy, and gay, than the style of Lovelace's letters in the immortal *Clarissa*? And yet they are wholly free from colloquial barbarisms, as your Colossus used to term them. With what pleasure should I see this your cluster of intellectual jewels, appearing through future editions, in cloudless brilliance! That done, and *The Travels of Mrs. Piozzi* will be one of the first ornaments of that class of reading.

MRS. TAYLOR,

Jan. 13, 1790.

No, indeed, and indeed, my dear friend, neither to fickleness or disregard, or shadow of picque, has my silence been owing. Convinced that an alarming oppression at my stomach, and difficulty of breathing, which attacked me last spring, was owing to too much sedentary employment, I reluctantly determined to

make longer pauses than usual between my replies to the letters of my correspondent.

Very eloquently did you enter, 1 May the 5th describe the sweetness of maternal happiness. That happiness is every day before me, but nevertheless it be more delicious and comfortable than any other infant draws her breast to me to nurse it.

I am very sorry to hear of your disappointment much more than I am of your disappointment to Mrs. Thrale than to any other person. As it has been given to the life and fortune of that woman owing to the care with which Mr. P. has selected them of the propounded and undesired passions on characters, perhaps much more essentially worthy than himself, were they to be tried by the rule of Christian charity. I do not think with you that his ungrateful violence against Mr. Thrale in her marrying Prozzi, arose from his indignation against her on his deceased friend's account. Mr. Boswell told me Johnson wished and expected to have married her himself. You ask who the Molly Aston was whom those letters mention with such passionate tenderness? Mr. Walmisley, my father's predecessor in this house, was, as you have heard, Johnson's Mezenas, and this lady, his wife's sister, a daughter of Sir Thomas Aston, a wit, a beauty, and a toast. Johnson was always fancying himself in love with some princess or other. His wife's daughter, Lucy Porter, so often mentioned in those letters, was his first love, when he was a school-boy, under my grandfather, a clergyman, vicar of St. Mary's, and master of the free-school, which, by his scholastic ability, was high in fame, and thronged with pupils, from some of the first gentlemen's families in this and the adjoining counties. To the free-school the boys of the city had a right to come, but every body knows how superficial, in general, is unpaid instruction.

However, my grandfather, aware of Johnson's genius, took the highest pains with him, though his parents were poor, and mean in their situation, keeping market stalls, as battledore booksellers. Johnson has not had the gratitude once to mention his generous master, in any of his writings; but all this is foreign to your inquiries, who Miss Molly Aston was, and at what period his flame for her commenced? It was during those school-days, when the reputation of Johnson's talents, and rapid progress in the classics, induced the noble-minded Walmsley to endure, at his elegant table, the low-born squalid youth – here that he suffered him and Garrick, to 'imp their eagle wings,' a delighted spectator and auditor of their efforts. It was here, that Miss Molly Aston was frequently a visitor in the family of her brother-in-law, and probably amused herself with the uncouth adorations of the learned, though dirty stripling, whose mean appearance was overlooked, because of the genius and knowledge that blazed through him; though with 'umbered flames,' from constitutional melancholy and spleen. Lucy Porter, whose visit to Lichfield had been but for a few weeks, was then gone back to her parents at Birmingham, and the brighter Molly Aston became the Laura of our Petrarch. Fired, however, at length, with ideal love, and incapable of inspiring mutual inclinations in the young and lively, he married, at twenty-three, the mother of his Lucy, and went to seek his fortune in London. She had borne an indifferent character, during the life of her first husband. He died insolvent, leaving his three grown-up children, dependent on the bounty of his rich bachelor brother in London, who left them largely, but would never do any thing for the worthless widow, who had married 'the literary cub,' as he used to call him. She lived thirty years with Johnson; if shuddering, half-famished, in an author's garret, could be called living.

During her life the fair and learned devotee, Miss H. Boothby, in the wane of her youth, a woman of family and genteel fortune, encouraged him to resume his Platonism. After the death of this wife, and this spiritualized mistress, Mrs. Thrale took him up. He loved her for her wit, her beauty, her luxurious table, her coach, and her library, and he loved him for the literary correspondence by which at Streatham threw around her. The rich, the proud, and titled literati, would not have caught John on in his dirty garret, nor the wealthy brewer's then uncelebrated wife, without the actual presence, in her saloon, of a votary known to be of the number of the inspired.

In the minds of the parents of our poetic Nisus and Euryalus, Cary and Lister, a prejudice has been instilled, that their imaginative talents are more likely to be a misfortune than a blessing to them. Beneath its influence they have turned a jaundiced eye upon their friendship, and actually prohibited all epistolary correspondence between them, though they are suffered to visit sometimes. Lister is of our city - Cary's habitation eight miles distant. I must observe, that though they have thus needlessly mortified and hurt the tender minds of these youths, yet are Mr. and Mrs. Lister visibly proud of their son's uncommon talents, and sedulous industry - they boast of the sweetness of his temper, which indeed shines out of his clear blue eyes, for he is beautiful as a vernal morning; somewhat, however, too decisive in his opinions, for years so blossoming. Cary's disposition is more saturnine. I think his genius the stronger of the two, but he has the same tenacious spirit of decision, the same thirst after knowledge, the same unwearied application, the same exemption from every immoral tendency. He is going to Oxford, Lister to Cambridge. This choice of different universities is, I apprehend, purposed, lest the enthusiasts should feed each others poetic flame.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

How finely is this pusillanimous dread delineated in Mr. Hayley's *Essays on Epic Poetry*.

Adieu! my dear Mrs. Taylor; never, for a moment, believe it possible I can forsake such friends as yourself, that have been

'Through twenty summers ripening in my heart.'

MRS. KNOWLES,

Feb. 23, 1790.

My heart thanks the friendly premonition with which your letter opens. It is about my taking exercise. You were, from experience, too well justified in concluding, that it would probably be fruitless; but the studious, or social sedentariness, for it is equally disposed to be either, so certainly natural to me, was, last summer, startled into peripatetic exertion, by oppressed respiration. Since that period, I have walked generally an hour a day, as round a pace as my strength will permit, in the Dean's Walk, 'when chill blustering winds, or driving rain, prevent not my *willing* feet' – no, I cannot quite say that, my *stimulated* feet – to pace their vowed mile upon the gravel. When they *do* prevent them, I remember your injunction in a long past letter, to tear along the gallery, clawing, like a wild cat, at the windows. There is no boasting that the whimsical portrait entirely suits me. However, along the gallery I do pace to and fro, though rather more like a tame than a wild cat; and I often make noise enough to rival cats, even in their moments of cruel love. In the conviction, that my lungs, as well as my limbs, require exercise, when I walk in the gallery, I close the end doors, and repeat long passages from our poets, aloud, the metrical treasures of my early years, or resume the pleasing labour of the memory, which continues to accumulate them. Social engagements, or household attentions,

engrossing — to perpetually the later hours of the day, I am obliged to subtract this earlier one from the leisure I used to devote to my absent friend — and to now and then admiring the Lady of the Mountain. Those who love me will consent to a longer interval between my letters, for my health — be it said to the 'yellow hand' — would fain be my friend. I make no scruple to 'up the yellow hand' in the face, when they approach me with extended pen.

I am charmed with your portrait of our Princes at Bughdamerne, and their train of apple-countiers. If I had not so often seen ordinary places resemble beautiful ones, I should be flattered that you think me so like the busy widow 'who taws out plump heart-apparent about by the heart-strings.' Several others have told me of the resemblance between us.

Last week arrived news that thrilled my heart with tender melancholy, the cutting off, by hereditary consumption, of that fair blossom, the daughter of my lost Honora. I have been assured she possessed her mother's beauty, and all those native intellectual graces, whose influence shone long upon my happiness, like a vernal morning. Honora Edgeworth was just fifteen. And grieving is the consciousness, that all remains, all traces of my soul's idol vanish thus from the earth. Her boy, ever feeble and delicate, will, I suppose, follow his lovely sister to an early grave.

Seldom have I seen a young man more qualified to pass innocently, laudably, and happily, a life of leisure, than your George. If he likes the sports of the field, moderately taken, they would advantage his health; and when there is such a love of books and the pencil, as dwells with him, no danger would surely arise, that

* *Mrs. Fisherbert.*

he should take field sports immoderately. His dependence upon you, his attachment to your person, your abilities, your virtues, form a bulwark about him against the vices of youth. The fortune which he will inherit from you, as the reward of his good conduct, is more than competent to the elegant comforts of life. Ah! why then endeavour to inspire him with the desire of accumulating so affluent a property? Is there a passion, – nay, is there a vice, which the New Testament declares more fatal to Christian peace, and Christian virtue than the thirst of riches? Never has experience shewn that happiness was the result of wealth, beyond the pale of affluence. Finely does that master of the human heart, that Shakespeare of prose, Richardson, express himself upon this subject: ‘You are, all of you, too rich to be happy, child; for must not each of you, by the constitutions of your family, be put upon making yourselves still richer; and so every individual of it, except yourself, will go on accumulating; and, wondering that they have not happiness, since they have riches, continue to heap up, till death, as greedy an accumulator as themselves, gathers them into his garner.’

It seems strange to me, than any person of an exalted mind, untainted with the vices of profusion, and undazzled by the splendour of ostentation, can wish a beloved child to imbibe the desire of increasing an affluent property; – stranger still, that a pious character should so wish, since the Scriptures declare it easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. The expression, *rich man*, certainly means a miser; and how great a temptation to this exclusive vice, is the habit of living daily in contemplation, and constant attention, to heaps of sordid Mammon!

Forgive my ingenuousness; the sincerity of an almost life-long friendship.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

Mrs. WILLIAMS,

Lichfield, April 1790.

It is true, my dear Miss Williams, the existence of him, whose death yet sits heavy on my heart, had been long destitute of all corporeal and intellectual energy; but it is a state of *severe* suffering alone, which, thank God, knew no not, that can banish the yearning regrets of affection for the loss of even the most faded and imperfect resemblance of what once was. I am, however, most thankful that the least of gratifications of protecting, comforting, and caring, that desolate form so long were mine. Since the declaration, though almost total, was not to him, all died.

Pam seldom visited his weak and calmly torpid frame, and never his mind during several past years; one period of about two years excepted, in which his failing memory about his property made him perpetually fancying that he had none, and was become poor, except in that interval, his life had been happy above the common lot. No displeasing circumstances even dwelt upon his joyous imagination. That dread of dissolution, so natural to every human being, on the startling symptoms of its approach, was to him precluded by the gathering mists upon his intellects, which veiled the prospect of the grave.

The pleasure he took in my attendance and caresses, survived till within the three last months, amidst the general wreck of sensibility. His reply to my inquiries after his health, was always, 'Pretty well, my darling;' and when I gave him his food and his wine, 'That's my darling,' with a smile of comfort and delight inexpressibly dear to my heart. I often used to ask him if he loved me, his almost constant answer - 'Do I love my own eyes?'

¹ 'Why could she not always write thus?' Macaulay asked himself in the margin of this letter. As himself did not reply, we can but assume that he was busy reading the next letter. - H.P.

Mrs. PROZZI,

Lichfield, April 1790.

Ah no! my dear Madam, Bath or London would be much too gay a scene for me. The local spells of the Close of Lichfield, formed by the remembrance of past happiness, are too powerful for me to break. My extreme attachment to this house, in which I have lived since I was 13 years old, and the generous moderation of my episcopal landlord, tempt me to try if I cannot remain in it. It will require my utmost frugality to make my moderate income, not quite amounting to £400 per annum, support the inevitable expense of so spacious a dwelling. Bath and London journeys are ill-calculated to such a plan. I must content myself with admiring and loving you all at a distance.

Mrs. HAYLEY,

July 27, 1790.

Your observation, that woman is never so permanently dear to any man as to her father, is generally just, and exceptions perhaps are few. It is difficult even for those who feel passion to distinguish it from affection. The difference is seldom known till the former is lost in unrestrained gratification. Men are rarely capable of pure unmixed tenderness to any fellow-creature except their children. In general, even the best of them, give their friendships to their male acquaintance, and their fondness to their offspring. For their mistress, or wife, they feel, during a time, a tenderness more ardent, and more sacred; a friendship softer and more animated. But this inexplicable, this fascinating sentiment, which we understand by the name of love, often proves an illusion of the imagination; — a meteor that misleads her who trusts it, vanishing when she has followed it into pools

and quicksands, where peace and liberty are swallowed up and lost. By observations like these, your friend is perfectly reconciled to her 'single blessedness'; so Shakespeare calls old-maidism—but it is, perhaps, too proud and beautiful a term!

Adieu! Adieu!

MR. KNOWLE

Edinburgh, May 1791

So Mr. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* is out at last, and its quantity of writing makes one wonder at his industry after the world has complained so long of his idleness. As yet I have got only about the middle of the first volume, the second I have not even seen, but I hear it contains the memorable conversation at Dilly's, but without that part of it of which I made minutes, and in which you appear to so much advantage over the imperious and gloomy Intolerant. This omission is surely unjustifiable, as I gave Mr. Boswell my memoir, and as I am sure, though it by no means contained all that was said, it contains nothing but what was said by you and by the despot. Mr. B. might have given as much more as you and he could recollect, but he should not have omitted those highly characteristic sentences. The little esteem, bordering upon contempt, which Boswell makes Johnson express for Mrs. Thrale, in the zenith of his intimacy with her, proves him inuincere, when it is compared with those glowing professions of veneration for her talents and virtues, which Johnson's letters to her so lavishly contain; but he had no real sincerity, notwithstanding all his parade about veracity. His truth was always straining at gnats, and swallowing camels. Mr. Boswell asserts its dignity in vain, while he gives such a proof of his falsehood and flattering duplicity. This work is, however, on the whole, infinitely entertaining.

MRS. MOMPESAN,

Lichfield, June 14, 1791.

Did I not manage my mind right stoically, not to touch upon any thing in the shape of an adieu? Was it not, camelian-like, to take the colour of your inclinations, who, I know, love to reserve your embraces for the hour of meeting? Never can I forget how warm those embraces were, when, in the dusk of a vernal evening, I entered your mansion, so embowered and so pleasant, after an absence of almost countless years. Never can I forget the month that glided so swiftly away amid your lovely glades, and in your thrice-dear society. Once more let me thank you for the sweetness and lustre of those recorded days.

As to the sultry morning of our separation, I have not, through life, been so sensible of climatic violence. The white and cloudless concave smote upon us with fiery severity, and clouds of choking dust rose incessantly around us.

But Mrs. Hayley received me with animated gladness, encompassed with youths of genius – the rising hopes of Derby. They walked with us into Mr. H.'s garden, and returned home with us to supper. Next morning we had levees in succession; half the smart people of that town, interspersed with the militia officers. We past the afternoon and evening at Dr. Darwin's, though he, who unites in himself what Johnson said of James and Garrick, viz., 'he who lengthened, and he who gladdened life,' the great physician and exquisite poet, was called thirty miles another way, in the exercise of his first power. Mrs. Darwin had an immense party to meet us, for whose apprehended amusement she engaged me, by earnest solicitations, to repeat odes and sonnets. If they were not egregious flatterers, the pleasure the company

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

expressed, made it impossible to grudge the exertion, even beneath a sky so torrid.

The next morning we paid some of our visits; and in the evening Mrs. Hayley had more than twenty friends to tea and supper; amongst them a gentleman who, on the instant of his being introduced, impressed my mind with a sentiment in his favour, more passionately tender than I had ever felt for any man on the first interview,

'Even in the heyday of impetuous youth,
The spring of life, the bloom of gaudy years.'

It was so tender as to force the tears in rivers down my cheeks, during the first half an hour in which he talked to me.

And now, lest your rigid decorum should induce you to censure, without mercy, emotions, at once so rapid and ungovernable, I must whisper to you the age of their inspirer; he is ninety-one - my father's old friend, Mr. Ashby, who preserves, at so late a period, his intellects and sensibility in wonderful power, and with the most attentive politeness; but the sunk mouth of extreme old age, the glazed eye, the hesitating feebleness of accent, the cold clammy hand that pressed mine with affectionate earnestness, all contributed to produce a resemblance to my poor father, so striking as to occasion those emotions I mentioned. He inquired after generations at Lichfield, long passed away, who were his contemporaries, and with whose names my mother had, in childhood, familiarized me, though they had then ceased to exist. He told me that he had often had my mother on his knee, the most beautiful infant of three years old, he said, he ever beheld.

You will imagine how interesting all this to me, who look back upon the years that are fled with all

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

the enthusiasm, though not with the science of an antiquarian: yet, however interested, gratified, and amused, by the politeness, vivacity, and intelligence of the Derby gentlemen and ladies, I found the heats dreadfully oppressive. Mrs. Hayley's tea-room, and the bed-chamber I occupied, are full west. Accustomed to slumber amidst the profoundest silence, and unable, through sultriness, to shut down my sashes, the street-noises, excessive and incessant, kept me awake two whole nights. I felt the torture of being startled into wakefulness every time the balmy power weighed down my eye-lids, and thought of the denunciation against Macbeth. I was never more sensible of its force, and of the misery of being forbid to taste the 'chief nourishment at life's feast'.

'Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
The death of each day's woe, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds!'

The stock of health I had acquired in your peaceful village began to vanish fast beneath such fatigue. I sighed for the cool book-room – the hermitage – the shaded lawns, and gurgling waters of Woodhouse.

I came home late on Sunday night and the next morning found the cathedral flowers and lawns in full bloom and beauty, with the addition of four more houses round the area being white rough-cast. It is now completely the milky way, a white zone round the verdant lawn, sweetly contrasting the lavish foliage of the scene.

You remember my observing to you how much our language had become, even in common conversation, Latinized, since Dr. Johnson's writings were familiar to people, and since his fine style had been so generally

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

less and malevolently false. Such, I confess, amidst all his gloomy piety, I always thought it.

I both blame Mr. Boswell and wonder at him for the wanton, because unnecessary, inroads which a number of those records must make upon the feelings of many. But for them, his work had been of great value indeed. Entertaining in the first degree, it certainly is; and with the most commendable precision, exhibits the events of his life through all their series and changes. It contains a prodigious mass of colloquial wit and humour, which were certainly unrivalled. Let it, however, be remembered, that to produce their eclipsing and resistless power, many things combined which a wise and generous mind would not for its own peace and health consent to feel, even to possess that unequalled talent: viz, spleen, envy, boundless haughtiness, and utter callousness to all the mental sensibilities of others. I am of St. Paul's mind, who says, where these things are, nor alms nor prayers constitute goodness.

Say thou, whose thoughts at humble fame repine,
Shall Johnson's wit with Johnson's spleen be thine?

DR. WHALLEY,

January 12, 1792.

Ah! my dear friend, though my health has been considerably better within these three weeks, I now take up my pen with a heavy heart, for I have lost your and my darling little dog. Our dear Sappho died suddenly this morning, without a shadow of previous illness. Mr. Green, our apothecary, thinks that the enlargement of her throat, where we have observed the artery so incessantly throbbing with uncommon violence, was an aneurism, which suddenly bursting, produced her instantaneous death. She had eaten a

good breakfast, had been frisking and bounding with her accustomed elasticity, ten minutes before. She lay asleep at my feet. I rose to search for a paper in the adjoining closet, turning back at the door to look whether she followed, I saw her gazing after me with that arch, dubious look whether he should follow or not, which she often wore when I went out of the room, and he thought it likely I should soon return. Just as I was opening the box which contained the paper I wanted, I heard her scream with wailful cry. I rushed back, and saw her stretched out in a seeming fit. I returned and a maid-servant, who was in the passage, instantly came in, who rubbed and chafed her in vain. Alas! the little life was irrecoverably fled. I sent for Giovanni,¹ whose grief equalled my own, and whose tears flowed in streams over the dear lifeless animal, whose gay and grateful affection you, as well as ourselves, have witnessed. I shall miss and lament her long. She was, as you know, one of the most amiable of that generous species, and the consciousness how often she has played about the knees of my dear old father; how she loved you and Giovanni, and, at last, Mrs. Whalley and everybody dear to me; what a sweet companion she was in all my journeys; — these recollections will make her long bewailed. You and Mrs. Whalley will both lament her, so will good Mr. Amons, who was so kind to her. Giovanni, who has been far from well lately, will, I am afraid, hurt himself with grieving. I prevailed upon him to go over to Derby and consult Dr. Darwin, whose medicines he is now taking. His symptoms alarm and distress me exceedingly.

To be sure, I have taken very deeply unkind that^{*} blind partiality with which he looks upon his daughter's ungrateful behaviour to me; yet my heart and soul shrink with unabated terror at every pain that

¹ Swifto.

annoys, every danger which threatens him. Six weeks since she was offended at my observing that, since the fashions changed so perpetually, I wondered she should choose to purchase a new black beaver hat, the second she has bought within the last year, and a new bonnet of expense, both at the same time, on her return from the Continent. Upon my adding, 'Indeed, my dear, I should have thought myself extravagant in purchasing two such hats at once,' she rose with a countenance of scorn, saying, as she left the room, 'I am not at all afraid of being thought extravagant for that.' From that time she has never entered my doors. Miss Aiden, who was my guest when this happened, thinks her behaviour inexcusable, and entreated me not to stoop to ask her to come again; so I presume her absence will be eternal. Her father says it is best so to be, having persuaded himself that she cannot err, and that I am disposed to look with the eye of unjust prejudice upon all her conduct. God knows he is much mistaken, but he will never think so.

Well! if Heaven does but preserve his health, and life, and peace, I will compound for an infatuation so unjust to the friendship I have felt and exerted towards his daughter.

DR. WHALLEY,

Lichfield, Feb. 26, 1792.

I thank you cordially for offering to replace, in the first fruitfulness of your new little canine darling, the loss I have lately sustained. Yet, O! what other animal of her species can replace the comfort and the pleasure of her impassioned attachment, and uncommonly endearing qualities? and I have determined to wait for a brother or sister of my sweet Sappho's, for the chance of obtaining, from the same parents, one that may resemble her. Sure I am that the shock of her sudden death materially injured Giovanni. He

doted upon her; and being out of health, the absolutely agonised grief with which he took up her lifeless body, and the bitter tears he shed whenever he entered this house for many ensuing days, from missing the glad welcome of her bounding affection and gay sensibility, preyed on his body as well as on his spirits. To this hour he cannot hear her mentioned, nor look at the places where she used to repose, without suffering visibly.

DR. WHALLEY,

Lichfield, May 18, 1792.

Ah! my dear Mr. Whalley, Giovanni's health began to fade again soon after his return from Bath. Though greatly better, he was not sufficiently recruited to bear, without injury, that influx of vicarial business which had accumulated during his absence, and which the voluntary cares and solitudes of near a thousand curious plants required. Yet he ventured to engage himself to sing the principal part in two oratorios at Birmingham, which were performed there on the 15th and 16th instant; but, as he was packing up his clothes to go thither, he was taken suddenly and violently ill - a still worse attack than any which preceded his Bath journey. He has remained very ill indeed, with transient intervals of amendment all the week. I now take the opportunity of one of those intervals to make the requested transcript, and to converse with you. When he is at the worst, I am totally incapable of writing; all the faculties of my mind sink in total in exertion, reviving only to feel corroding grief and dreadful anxiety. As it seems material to you to receive my letter before you leave Chipley, I would not omit to write immediately, lest my dear friend's situation should grow more alarming. I sent for Doctor Darwin to him, who says the case is obscure and doubtful. O, my dear Edwy, pray for me, that I

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

may not be exposed to the dreadful anguish of perceiving this disease incurable, of living to see it terminate fatally!

DR. WHALLEY,

Lichfield, June 14, 1792.

I will not repeat to you, my dear Mr. Whalley, the sad story of my anxious sorrows through the past five weeks; of the sick suspense and bitter heartaches with which I awake generally by the first dawn of the now early day, and in which I remain through the ensuing slow hours till six o'clock, when I send to his house for intelligence of his sitter-up. If it is favourable, I drop asleep till nine or ten. Conscious of the inevitable injury of his breathing the close air of his own very small house many hours in the day, I have, with great difficulty, persuaded him to alight at mine when he returns at two o'clock from his airing, and to stay in my large and airy apartments till he goes out again at six in the evening. Wholly unable, as he is, to bear the sound of mixed voices, I avoid all company, that my house may give him that silence and quiet which are so necessary to him; and I have never drank tea from home, except once with Lady Gresley, since he was seized. Alas! my kind friend, it is wholly in vain to inculcate, or to hope for me, the exertions of fortitude, or the dignity of calmness. I am — I ever was, a creature of impulse, to whom all the discipline of self-government has been utterly unattainable. My whole sum of peace, and comfort, and earthly hope, long desperately set on one precarious die, often and often, but always vainly, have I struggled in the indissoluble toils of my affection.

DR. WHALLEY,

Lichfield, November 25, 1792.

On a gloomy afternoon, the 19th of September, as I

it alone in the drawing-room, and 'humming sweet and better thoughts.' A young stranger entered the room with such an interesting though pensive smile, as made you deem

Dinner, no colder than a boy.

After desiring him to be seated I asked if I had ever before had the pleasure of seeing him. He answered, he thanked me. 'Yes,' I could recollect him strangely familiar. 'I never,' I said, 'I never till then felt in my whole life, and my most fervent instances of affection, upon my heart for a being whom the preceding moment I had considered as a stranger!' Involuntarily I seized his hand and burst into tears, exclaiming, 'Do I then indeed behold the only child of dear lost Honora?' When I had become more composed, I looked eagerly for the wished resemblance. I found, or fancied I found, some, but it was in countenance only, not at all in features, and did not amount to decided likeness. I then walked with him through the apartments of that mansion, which had been the home, the acknowledged happy home, of his amiable, his lovely mother, of her blooming infancy and consummate youth apartments that yet seemed to breathe of her, that yet retained the vestiges of her enchanting influence, her name inscribed on the windows, her profile on the wall! To these I directed his attention, and, above all, to the beauteous print of Romney's *Serena*, which is exactly what she was at sixteen.

I am sure his spirit and heart are all his mother's. His voice has the most touching sweetness, and there seemed the glow of sensibility in every little word, in every gentle exclamation; but he did not look in health, and if, 'the silken primrose must fade timelessly,' I shall wish I had never beheld its graces. Ill does that mild spirit seem calculated to sustain the

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

tyrannous caprices of an unfeeling father. He stayed only half an hour. When he took leave, it seemed as if my soul went with him. My eye pursued him to the gate, and when he vanished, I returned sighing to a solitude which seemed solitude indeed.

MR. SAVILLE,

Buxton, June 15, 1793.

That being of true integrity – that prodigy of self-cultivated genius, Newton, the minstrel of my native mountains, walks over them from Tideswell, his humble home, to pass the day with me to-morrow. To preclude wonder and comments upon my attentions to such an apparent rustic at the public table, I have shewn two charming little poems of his, which are deservedly admired by everybody here. Expecting a letter from you on Monday, I will not finish this till I receive it.

June 18th.

The wintry storms of Sunday morning detained my minstrel at home, in deceived hopes of the fairer hour, so that he did not arrive till one. Nothing could be more flattering to me and to him, than the reception he met with from the company at St. Anne's. They were generous enough not to suffer his plain appearance, his unpowdered and drenched locks, and provincial accent, to chill the civilities and respect which they shewed him. When I took him to the public table at the hotel, I particularly presented him to Sir John and Lady Clerk, the Baron, etc. They conversed with him; they praised his verses. Lady Clerk desired Mr. Newton and myself would drink tea in her parlour. We had previously engaged ourselves to Mrs. Sedley; but we went to Sir John and his lady at seven, and staid with them till the supper bell rung; when, contrary to all our entreaties, he would not stay till next morning. Business obliged him to encounter

a walk of such fatiguing length. The storms still raged and swept beneath the mantle of night, but he is used to these wintry walks. Sir John and he talked much of the home, and Lady Clerk conversed with him about Sterne's writings, of which he is an admirer, and he recalled to her recollection a number of those fine characteristic sketches, which delineate so true to nature, and the subtle and philosopher, his brother. Every thing appeared with the mingled gentleness and modesty with which he delivered his requests, sent a note, and departed.

MR. SAVILE,

Buxton, June 22, 1793.

I will not attempt a minute description of yesterday's sensations, the feeling heart of my friend will conceive them, the increasing throbs, 'the strengthening thrills of melancholy pain,' as I drew nearer and nearer to the parental scene. Though the air had the sharpness of March, the sun shone clear and bright. Its rays played on the vast rocks of that known dale, which must be passed from Lyam to every surrounding hamlet or villa. I could not restrain the gushing tears, through almost the whole of the five hours I passed in that dear village. Its inhabitants flocked about me, and lamented afresh my dearest father's loss to them: he who had been their benevolent rector forty years: they expressed the most affectionate joy to see me; honest grateful creatures, they rung three peals to welcome me; and I departed in the evening, amidst their warm benedictions. Oh! every face, every voice recalled, with redoubled force, my lost father. - And the sight of the desolate rectory. - I did not enter it - I could not; but I lingered in the churchyard, weeping bitterly as I gazed on the walls, the windows, the neglected garden, which, in despite of their altered appearance, yet strongly bear the stamp and magic

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

of their vanished possessor, who loved me with so much passionate tenderness.

MR. SAVILLE,

Scarborough, July 29, 1793.

Whenever the wind blows from the east at this port, however calmly it may breathe on shore, the sea runs high. All yesterday it had a large portion of the sublimity I had invoked. About a quarter of a mile down the right-hand sands, a small promontory juts out; upon its topmost bank, about twenty yards high, the chalybeate springs arise; and there also a fort is constructed, with parapet walls, to which we ascend by steps. At high-water, the sea encircles this promontory, and lashes its rocks.

Last night, at eight o'clock, as we walked upon the cliff, we saw the waves of a sublimely agitated sea dashing and bounding up the sides of the fort, their spray flying over its parapets. The tide was then on the turn, and we were told, that, in about an hour, we might walk to the promontory, by keeping close to the base of the rocks, and attain the elevation before the waves had ceased to lash and clamber up its walls. Nobody but myself being inclined to venture, I went home to undress, resolved to taste, amidst the incumbent gloom of a very lowering night, a scene congenial to my taste for the terrible graces. Requesting the stout arm of Mr. Dewes's servant, I began with him my sombre expedition. As I passed along the sands, the tide twice left its white surf upon my feet; and the vast curve of those fierce waves, that burst down with deafening roar, scarce three yards from me, sufficiently gratified my rage for the terrific.

We found the lower steps of the fort inaccessible, from the waters not having yet receded from them; but, with some difficulty, climbing behind the rocks, I got upon a level with the sixth step, and was thus

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

enabled to ascend the eminence. By this time, the last gloom of the night had fallen, and the white foam of the thundering waters made their 'darkness visible'. It seemed scarce possible that an unconscious element could wear such horrid appearance of living rage. Each billow seemed a voraginous monster, as it came roaring on, and dashed itself against the repelling walls. The spray of each flashing wave flew over my head, and wet me on its descent. The pealing waters, louder than thunder, made it impossible for me or the servant to hear each other speak. My own maid would not venture to accompany me on an expedition of such seeming peril. I stood at least half an hour on the wild promontory's top, almost totally encircled by the dark and furious main. It was half-past ten when I returned to Lord Lifford's, to take my leave of the party, and to acknowledge the infinitely kind attentions with which they had honoured me.

THE REV. DR. PARR.¹

Bridlington, Aug. 17, 1793.

We Lichfieldians are at present, it is true, very unanimous in our orthodoxy and in our loyalty. The distinctions of whig and tory, that once and long bred much ill-blood amongst us, have lost their force during the elapse of many years; and in these perilous times, which have so clearly shown the mischiefs of plausible theories, they are totally dissolved. One common sentiment pervades our bosoms, which have perhaps not perfect congeniality on other themes. We feel grateful for the protection, freedom and com-

¹ Samuel Parr, 1747-1825, was a sort of whig Dr. Johnson, and though but a pale understudy of the tory original many people listened to his views with respect. He sympathised with the French Revolution in its early stages; hence Anna's fear that he might not like the orthodox attitude of her Lichfield neighbours, and her desire to warn him of her own feelings before he called. - H.P.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

fort we enjoy beneath the influence of a constitution, which has given to our little island such mighty consequence in the consideration of Europe through a century's course; whatever of human, and therefore inevitable imperfection, may be found in its construction by those Utopian searchers, who call themselves philosophers, and who would beguile us from our safeholds by visionary plans of unattainable excellence. . . .

Beautiful edifices of polity are raised by men of dazzling abilities, assuming the title of philosophers. But to render them safe on experiment, as they are plausible in theory, mankind must have been created, not as they are, mulish, selfish, and malevolent, but ductile, disinterested, and kind.

Thus these fair and promising edifices, being built on sandy foundations, fall, on trial, into an heap of shapeless ruins, and in that fall overwhelm freedom, security, subordination, mercy, and piety; as the example of France evinces. If, to be a philosopher, is, as I understand it to be, a lover of wisdom; if, to be a patriot, is to be a lover of the country he inhabit, to be zealous for her interests, and tenacious of her glory, then the most ignorant amongst the contented and the grateful, have more real claim to those appellations, than the daring innovators who, with the dreadful example before their eyes, seek to lift the flood-gates of a torrent which they know they have no power to bank up again.

MRS. HAYLEY,

Lichfield, Oct. 5, 1793.

You would be sorry to hear that poor Moll Cobb, as Dr. Johnson used to call her, is gone to her long home. If you saw the ridiculous puffing, hyperbolic character of her in the public papers, it would make you stare and smile at the credence due to newspaper portraits.

THE SWAN OF LITCHFIELD

Those, however, who draw them in colour so false and glaring, are very reprehensible. This was the disgrace of a pen capable of far better things than such a tribute of gross and unmanly flattery to the vanity of the surviving relation. It is not as if the author knew the uniform contempt with which John once spoke both of the head and heart of the poor man, or that he liked the convenience of attaching the title of her descendant to the name of the noble family of which he was a foreigner. Nature has not given him the power of such a mention of John, nor even of Mrs. Cobb, of whose decease he is speaking, for in a room full of company here, the name of John is never to be heard. How should we laugh at John, or never at Moll Cobb be a wit? Cobb has read nothing. Cobb knows nothing, and where nothing has been put in the brain, nothing can come out of it to any purpose of rational entertainment. Somebody replied, 'Then why is Dr. Johnson so often her visitor?' 'Oh! I love Cobb. I love Moll Cobb for her impudence.' The despot was right in his premises, but his conclusion was erroneous. Little as had been put into Mrs. Cobb's brain, much of shrewd, biting and humorous satire was native in the soul, and has often amused very superior minds to her own. Of that superiority, however, she had no consciousness: her ignorance and self-sufficiency concealed it effectually. She was a very selfish character, nor knew the warmth of friendship, nor the luxury of bestowing. Thus has her monumental wall been daubed by very untempered mortar indeed. Yet, to her we may apply what Henry V. says of Falstaff,

We could have better spared a better man;
 O! we should have a heavy miss of thee,
 If we were much in love with vanity.

Adieu!

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

MISS BRANDISH,

Lichfield, Dec. 6, 1793.

Now as to Lichfield news. Events are scarce, and, had they been ever so plenteous, would have been transmitted to you by your friends of the galaxy, or milky way, as Mr. Inge pleasantly calls the white semi-circle of the cathedral area. Shall I tell you of a lady who falls into talking trances in company, in which she appears repelling the enamoured solicitations of former rejected lovers? Or of Mrs. B—'s jealousy, excited by the long and eloquent billets which Miss A. writes to her ancient, honest, downright husband? — of the former's exclaiming in company that she wonders what Miss A. means by sending flourishing notes, down three sides of paper, to her husband — she is sure he never gives her, nor any other woman, encouragement. Are not these things almost too ridiculous for credibility? — yet people witness their serious existence. Thus it is that the intervals of the deal, at the card tables, are supplied with conversation, when, tired of the horrid miracles of guilt in France, they turn to the comic miracles of absurdity in our own circles. Not but the heads and hearts of the fair, the young, the gay amongst us, are full of a subject more interesting to them at present than public tragedies, or private farces — the approaching masquerade at Drakelow. . . .

I was honoured with an invitation — but my life is too much in the yellow-leaf for such frolic scenes. Adieu!

H. F. CARY, Esq.,

Lichfield, March 16, 1794.

Sincerely do I thank you for the truly friendly and generous indignation you have felt and expressed for Boswell's unprovoked and malicious insolence. It would be contrary to the declared intention, expressed

in my last letter to Urban, and certainly beneath me, to pursue this controversy farther. Idly immaterial as to its subject, it was began by me but in defence of the veracity of my evidence, rudely called in question by this man, in his supplementary notes to the *Life of Johnson*, and pursued by him with such impertinent and insidious spite. It is, however, material, that I publicly convict the falsehood and arrogance of the Johnsonian adulator in one respect, so soon as I can procure the certainly existing means. You see him, in the magazine for January, denying that Johnson ever uttered that general slander on the poetic race, involved in his commendation of Watts, viz., that 'he was one of the few poets who could look forward with rational hope to the mercy of their God'; nay, seems to deny that there ever was any published record of that base slander. Now, in print I declare I read it, though its precise situation now escapes my recollection. Well do I remember the indignant feelings it excited in my heart. The impression was in recent force, when I sent the last Benvolio letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1787, and which records *verbatim* the unworthy sentence. Whether I then copied it from the despot's own writings, or from some of the various printed memorabilia of his conversation, I do not now know. If you, or any other friend, can recollect where it is inserted, the communication will oblige me. At present, I am too busily employed in the more necessary concerns to re-read, for the purpose, his works, or the records of his biographers. I have looked over his life of Watts – there it is not.

Hector of Birmingham's letter is scarce less impertinent, and contains an absolute, though perhaps an involuntary, falsehood. Everybody knows that Johnson was born in the year ten or late in the year nine. Hector attests, that Johnson wrote the myrtle verses for him in the year 1731 – and solemnly declares,

that it was not till two years after, that he had any knowledge of any of the Porter family, to whom he was then, for the first time, introduced by him. That must be in Johnson's twenty-second year. Strange forgetfulness indeed in Mr. Hector, who, if he had considered at all, must have recollected that my grandfather, Mr. Hunter, married the sister of this same Porter of Birmingham, his second wife, when Johnson was his pupil, several years preceding that era. During this pupilage, Johnson had frequent access to his master's house and table, and there he saw and fancied he loved the young Lucy Porter, who, early on her aunt's marriage with my grandfather, made her a visit of several months at Lichfield. Then and there, Johnson, a school-boy in his teens, some three or four years older than his beloved, made the verses on receiving from her a sprig of myrtle, which verses he afterwards gave to Mr. Hector, without thinking it necessary to declare their previous origin. That this was the fact, on the frequent testimony of the scrupulously ingenuous Lucy Porter and my mother, I am perfectly convinced. Soon after Johnson's death, Boswell earnestly requested me to tell him all I had heard concerning the youthful days of that wonderful mortal; concluding, that my mother knew many such anecdotes, and had probably mentioned them. See how he requites the trouble I took to oblige him! Instances like these have a tendency to shut up the frank and trusting heart in misanthropic reserve.

I have this instant read your very kind letter on this subject, signed M.S., in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for February. Another epistle, succeeding it, is also friendly to me, as well as learned and ingenious. I think it likely that letter is Dr. Parr's. I should have thought it yours, but that the preceding one has your known signature. . . .

A friend has this minute shown me, in Johnson's

Life of West, an exactly similar stigma on the Poets to that which Boswell so arrogantly affirms he never uttered. In the fourth volume of his *Lives*, p. 316, he says of West: 'A stroke of the palsy brought to the grave one of those few poets to whom the grave needed not be terrible.'

He who, with his pen, thus malignantly brands a class of beings, ever considered as the honours of their respective countries, could have no scruple to utter the twin slander which I copied, in the year 1786, from the records of some of his biographers, if not from his writings, and which he blended with his eulogy on Watts. Praise was so heterogeneous to Johnson's nature, that we generally find him recompensing the self-violence, by some of those malicious reflections on which his spirit luxuriated.

THE REV. T. S. WHALLEY,

Lichfield, July 25, 1794.

Lord Fielding is here with his regiment. He and his lovely lady are living socially among us. The Dean has let them his house. They are extremely fond of music. Lady F. plays and sings divinely. She speaks of your beloved Mrs. Mullin's rival excellence in that line with warm and generous praise. They give private concerts, which are made for them in return. Last Monday they met a party of twenty-five at my house. Three violins, a violoncello, Lady F.'s harp, and a harpsichord, formed our band. Bending over her harp, when she sweeps her white hands over its strings, and mixes her song with its tones, we see and hear a living Cecilia. Mr. Saville and our three diletantes, Miss Parker, Mr. Simpson, and Mr. Thomas White, joined Lady F. in duets and glees. The saloon in my house is an excellent room for music, and held us all without crowd, and the evening passed off with apparent satisfaction to the company. My ill-health

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

made me dread the fatigue; but I was fortunately better on that day than I had found myself long before, or than I have been since. Lady F. assembles us at the Deanery on Monday. If I was well, I should delight in these parties.

MRS. JACKSON,

Lichfield, July 31, 1794.

Unworthy should I be of your late assiduous and cordial attentions to me, were not my heart assured that yours will feel pleasure in knowing that I have almost lost those terrors which lately haunted my mind, and excited so many kind exertions on your part to relieve them.¹

To leech-bleeding I believe myself indebted for the comfortable amendment I feel. They were applied four times. The raging heat of the weather then coming on, induced me to suspend the continuation of an operation so troublesome, succeeded by a week's extreme soreness in each of the petit wounds. Continuing to amend, I hope I shall not have occasion to re-apply this remedy.

The diversity, nay absolute contradictions, in medical opinions are strange and somewhat discomfoting, as weakening our reliance on their aid. Mr. Saville went lately to town to seek that relief for a disorder in his ears, which he happily found from the skill of the celebrated aurist, Maul. His friendship for me induced his consulting two eminent surgeons, who are personal friends, concerning my late accident.

¹ For months she had lived under the fear of cancer. The previous March she had hurt her left breast 'by slipping against the sharp pointed ledge of a wainscot, in stooping to reach an hearth brush'. Much pain followed. Then: 'By surgical advice I have applied leeches thrice to the part, according to the present practice of the London faculty. Their bite, which is nothing on the temples, is on the bosom a very painful, as well as troublesome, operation, and the wounds continue many days sore and inflamed.' In spite of the doctor's advice she recovered. — H.P.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

Their opinions, given separately, coincided perfectly with each other, but surely in the first assertion contradicted the experience of ages, and in the last that of late years; for of *those* I believe is the applying leeches to a part suspected of cancerous tendency. That it was the great Hunter's practice we know. These gentlemen told Mr. Saville that no cancer was ever produced by a blow, and that to apply leeches to the seat of pain might do an injury, and could be of no service.

.
As to leeches. . . . Surely these gentlemen reject them against all reasoning from probability of their use, as well as in scorn of recent experience. External injury produces inflammation, and that always precedes induration. Bleeding is found to abate inflammation, and where the heat and pain are, local bleeding is most likely to be efficacious.

However relieved from horrid apprehensions, more afflicting than actual pain, yet is my general health very indifferent. My difficulty of breathing on the least exertion, has been more severely and constantly oppressive since my return from Nottingham early in March. I think I injured myself there by complying with the earnest request of different companies, that I would read scenes of Shakespeare aloud. This was immediately on recovering from a violent cough and inflammation on my lungs. To read Shakespeare without energy and without great exertion, is not within my chapter of possibilities. One evening I read all the principal scenes of *Macbeth* aloud, and have never breathed freely since. . . .

J. JOHNSON, ESQ.,
High Lake, Sept. 20, 1794.

Amidst many other agreeable circumstances, for which I have been indebted to your friendship, I thank

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

you for recommending High Lake to me as a marine residence. I like it extremely; and, though often indisposed, hope to receive benefit from its pure gales and placid waters. All my fear is an abated degree of saline strength in the billows, by the intermixture of fresh water from the rivers Dee and Mersey, incessantly stealing into the lake amidst the salt green streams of the ocean.

We have here a very pleasant society, to the amount of about thirty. The music at Liverpool allured a considerable part of it thither; amongst the rest my cousin T. White and his bright-eyed friend. I had an arduous struggle with my inclinations on that occasion. Considerations of health, however, prevailed over every temptation to indulge myself in the highest luxury my senses can experience, and I remained quiet at High Lake.

EDMUND WIGLEY, ESQ., M.P.,

High Lake, Oct. 1, 1794.

We miss you on the airy promontory, and on the silver sands. A certain sunny smile is wanted to re-illuminate our little circle, gloomed by melancholy shipwreck, and all its heart-affecting particulars. A ship sunk, close to the sand-island on the ocean side, yesterday morning at nine o'clock, overwhelmed by the heavy and stormy seas. Her seven mariners perished, besides the other passengers which probably she had on board. An American vessel, which put into this Lake a few hours after, and which was itself in great danger, saw her sink within gun-shot, without being able to afford the least assistance to the unhappy creatures, who, with the dire shrieks of despair, were clinging round her masts and shrouds. Boats have been going off to the wreck ever since, whose men return with sad narrations from hour to hour. Ascending the highest apartment of this hotel, we saw

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

the dismal wreck distinctly through a telescope, with the several boatmen which had landed on the island, and were busied about it; and some of them bending over the dead bodies that lay scattered on the sands. Three of them were found in a dreadfully lacerated condition, and brought into the Lake in a boat last night.

These are the shocking circumstances, which, to inlanders, often counteract the exhilarating effect of coast-residence, even while they make us feel, with the most sensible comfort,

'The grove's blest shelter on the stable shore,
Where the tall pine-tree sings beneath the wind.'

I have quoted those pretty lines, translated by a friend of mine from an idyllium of the Greek poet, Moschus, though there are neither groves nor pine-trees at High Lake. Imagination, however, easily substitutes a grove for a feather-bed - and for rattling windows, whistling trees.

DAVID SAMWELL, Esq.,

Lichfield, March 17, 1795.

It flatters me that you like my little poem on Hoyle Lake. I have really not exaggerated the mild *agremens* of the scene. The handsome hotel, built since you saw it, the little appendant white cottages, scattered around, to supply it with milk, butter, &c., diffuse an air of cheerful and social comforts, where you saw only barren and lonely downs. The rich and varied scenery on the Flintshire coast, rising from the waters of the Dee, form, when the azure mirror is full, a soft and beautiful marine landscape, recompensing the absence of rocky grandeur, and the terrific graces of oceanic sublimity.

MRS. POWYS,

Lichfield, April 1, 1795.

The 13th of March brought Mr. and Mrs. Whalley to me, whose dear society I have also very recently lost. One of the heaviest afflictions that can wring the feeling bosom, after having tormented them near two years with terror of its descent, became, some four months since, complete: an affliction, the corrosive bitterness of which must inevitably mingle with all of comfort which they may hereafter taste, till human evil, neither by immediate pressure, nor cruel recollection, can annoy them more. Mr. W.'s lovely, accomplished, and celebrated niece, Miss Sage that was, Mrs. Mullins that is, Miss Sage that will again be, was, in her infancy, recommended to his care by the maternal tenderness of a beloved sister, expiring in the bloom of life. This sacred and precious trust, Mr. and Mrs. Whalley executed with the most sedulous attention and fondest indulgence. She grew, she bloomed; — the pride, the delight of their hearts. Genius and wit aided, by rapidly acquired endowments, the fascinations of beauty. — The creations of the pencil glow beneath her fingers. Her skill, taste, and invention on the harpsicord is scarce inferior to that of the first masters; and to a voice of exquisite tone, power, compass, and inflexion, she adds the touching graces of harmonic expression, in a degree of excellence that approaches to enchantment. She was abroad with her aunt and uncle Whalley, in the year 1786, and, mistress of French and Italian, she conversed, sung, — she played, she danced, the day-star of our island; — so that nothing was more talked of in the then happy French cities than the charming Englishwoman.

Three years since, Mr. and Mrs. W. and her father had the happiness of seeing her married to Mr. Mullins, a gentleman of graceful person, splendid

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

fortune, and generous virtues, the impassioned choice of her avowed affections.

After a twelvemonth's ardent attention to him, repaid on his part by the most devoted indulgence, she grew cold, and apparently oppressed by every instance of his regard, and charmed by the admiration of other men. She racked his heart with jealousy, and received his expostulations with scorn; grieved and alarmed from time to time, by her levities, those tender friends who had been the guardians of her youth; and at last, a few months since, eloped with Captain Tothe of the guards, with whom she now lives in total disgrace, reckless of having blasted her constellation of talents — reckless of this dire apostacy from gratitude, from love, from honour, and from duty.

Never will my friends cease to grieve over this fallen star, that was once and long the light of their existence. Though, at times, the native energy of Mr. Whalley's spirit pervaded, in social intercourse, the gloom of this woe, yet, whenever he was either not speaking himself, or not particularly addressed by others, I saw the corroding recollection rising darkly to his fixing eye, and sitting on his relaxing lips. Both their healths have been much impaired by this shock. You who have so poignantly experienced guardian affection, and guardian solicitude, will know how to feel for Mr. and Mrs. W., and to commiserate their regrets.

MRS. HAYLEY,

Lichfield, June 19, 1795.

Yes, I could have been certain Mr. Nigel V— would be one of your favourites. Most of the young men of that house have abilities, all have virtues; but around him only do the softer lights of elegance play. Disease and death have, as you know, mournfully eclipsed the cheerfulness and comforts of this worthy family, and the melancholy influence will, I fear, long remain.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

The generous parental indulgence of the aged pair seems doomed to be tried in almost every matrimonial connection formed by their sons. The good qualities of the lady to whom the eldest united himself, have recompensed the much which, from peculiar circumstances, was to be forgiven in that marriage. The choice of the second disappointed their hopes for him, at least as to fortune. Plump Geoffry gave them a daughter, whose sprightly graces blended agreeably with his oily placidness; whose cheerful attentions to them are very gratifying, and whose family and fortune were of no mortifying inequality. And Nigel — yes, Nigel, they all pronounced would marry with eclat, or not at all. 'His brothers, said they, are all of tempers either retired or eccentric; not, therefore, likely to marry advantageously; but Nigel is a man of the world; he has ambition both professionally and connubially; his eloquence will aid the former, and for the latter, the graces are his handmaids.'

I thought with them on this subject, not dreaming that his hereditary virtues were doomed to counteract these probable and pleasant expectations. A Miss M— was distantly related to the eldest son's wife, and several years resident with that couple. Without fortune, beauty, modern accomplishments, or consequential connections, she is a very sensible, well-informed, and good young person, with the manners of a gentlewoman. That contagious and fatal fever which robbed the venerable pair of their darling granddaughter, seized Miss M—. In its paroxysms, she raved of Mr. Nigel V—incessantly. — The servants told him. Careless of infectious danger, he rushed to her bedside, and became her constant attendant, soothing and entreating her to live for him; and, on her recovery, adjured his father that he would not oppose his acting as became a man of feeling and honour, nor tempt him to wish for the death of an

indulgent parent, by counteracting an attachment founded on gratitude and pity.

Thus, though called to the bar, this elegant young man is content to resign the higher walks of the law, that he may the sooner perform those tender promises, which he believes to have rescued an amiable woman from the grave. He is studying the profession of a country barrister with the most sedulous application.

This is very, *very* good; yet, surely there can be no absolute duty compellant to such a sacrifice, since a man of his very nice honour has, doubtless, the consciousness of never having tried, by the subtlety of silent seduction, to inspire a passion he did not mean to return. If there were such a duty, every good man lies at the mercy of any woman who may choose to supply the want of fortune and attractions, by a convenient fever and delirium. The little god might then, with impunity, exchange his bow and his darts for a box of pills and a blister.

MISS SYKES,

Lichfield, June 30, 1795.

This is the period of inconceivable characters, as well as of unexpected and prodigious events. The modern Thalestris is now in this city, Mademoiselle le Chevalier D'Eon, exhibiting, for two shillings admittance, her skill in the art of attack and defence with the single rapier.

Melancholy reverse of human destiny! what an humiliation for the aide-de-camp of Marshal Broglie! — for the ambassador, during five years, from the court of France to that of Russia! — for the envoy to ours, and the principal planner and negociator of the peace of 1782! — In the German war, she lived five years in camps and tented fields, amidst the pride, the pomp, and circumstance of high trust and glorious contest. In the American war, she was in five battles, fought

against General Elliot, and received six wounds; – and all this before her sex was discovered.

I learned from herself, that a destiny so astonishing was not originally the result of voluntary choice. Her parents bred her up as a boy, to avoid losing an estate entailed on the heir-male.

She seems to have a noble, independent, as well as intrepid mind; – and the muscular strength and activity of her large frame at sixty-nine, are wonderful. She fences in the French uniform, and then appears an athletic, venerable, graceful man. In the female garb, as might be expected, she is awkwardly, though not vulgarly masculine.

In three days she was to have sailed for France, by the order of the late unfortunate monarch, to have resumed her male dress, and to have taken military command as General, when the massacre at the Thuilleries, and imprisonment of the king, lamentably frustrated that design, and probably dropt an eternal curtain over her career of glory. Adieu! adieu!

MR. C—¹.

Lichfield, July 31, 1795.

I was disappointed that we did not meet on Wednesday. Your friend L., since I wrote to you last, has inspired, by some intelligence he imparted, a double earnestness to converse with you. Your welfare is dear to me, – and, in proportion as I wish your happiness, am I alarmed by that intelligence. You will guess that he has told me of your inclination to renounce the clerical for the military life; – the endeavour to promote the moral virtue and piety of a part of your fellow-creatures, for that of destroying them at the mandate of a king and his ministers.

¹ From this letter, addressed to H. F. Cary (who took her advice), we may conjecture that Anna was responsible for the first and in some respects the best translation of Dante into English. – H.P.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

No man who, like yourself, has a deeply-thinking mind, and nicely-scrupulous conscience, ought to be a soldier. The moment that he has the least doubt of the justice of the cause in which his country engages, he may call himself her defender, but his secret heart will tell him that he is an hireling assassin.

So much for the employment and exertion you pant after during the period of war. Let us now consider the grave, the contemplative, the studious, and lettered young man of genius, in 'the piping time of peace' and in exertion, wandering from town to town, perhaps into distant climates, inimical to health and life, with a set of silly, uninformed, and, because ignorant, insolent coxcombs, in whose, at best, frothy, and probably indecent and profane conversation, he must at least pass the social hours of meal-time, through a course of tedious years. If no other than the meal-time hours, he will be hated for shunning that intercourse which, to partake more largely, must, to a mind so tempered, prove inexpressibly irksome. Despised whether he shares or shuns – despised and ridiculed as the learned quizz, he will inevitably be, amongst such associates. O! remember Swift's poetic maxim of eternal truth:

'Great examples are in vain
Where ignorance begets disdain.'

Reflect also upon the disadvantages in the line of promotion and rank that must result from your going so late into a profession for which you are, of all others, least calculated; – where your fine talents will be but useless incumbrances; – where you will be the junior of boys, and subject to their imperious commands.

Read, I adjure you, in the first volume of the *Rambler*, the nineteenth number; it is upon the importance of an early choice of profession. Consider well

its contents, for they are the dictates of a judgment which seldom erred, except from the lamented prevalence of personal antipathy, political prejudice, or jealous spleen.

A profession was necessary to you, C—. On the dawn of manhood your father desired you to choose one. You did choose, and were, at a considerable expence, educated for that chosen line: a profession most suitable to your studious disposition and classical inclinations; — in which your fine poetic talent, that distinguishing grace of your nature, might best be cultivated, and which it may best adorn. And now, that the choice has long been made, the qualifying studies pursued, and the requisite acquirements attained, you are disposed to renounce it for one miserably ill-calculated to every bent of your mind, every habit of your life, every feeling of your heart.

You apprehend that the life of a country clergyman will be dull and inactive; — but at least, so situated, your time, your books, your liberty, in all respects but as to place of residence, will be yours; — and place is little to a mind rich in its resources. As a soldier you will not have your liberty in any of these circumstances. If you dislike village retirement, you may live in the university, take pupils, acquire literary fame, and associate with literary men.

There is another consideration, which I request permission to enforce with all the sincerity and solicitude of friendship — your filial duty. You have an affectionate and indulgent father. Will you not govern yourself towards him by that golden precept which involves the whole moral duties? 'Do unto others as you would they should do unto you.' Put yourself in his situation: Imagine that you have a son, who, after you had allowed him to choose his own profession; after having, at a considerable expence, educated him

for that profession; – after you had often felt and expressed your conviction that it was, above every other, adapted to his genius, his habits, and to your own powers of serving him: – then, when on its verge, to see him recoiling, with unmanly fickleness, and turning aside into a path where it is totally unlikely that he should attain either content, distinction, or emolument; and in which you have no prospect of being able materially to assist him.

Such I understand are Mr. C.'s convictions respecting this strange fancy, unworthy of your understanding in its unsteadiness, and in its blindness to the certainly ensuing consequences. – What pain would such conduct in a beloved son give you!

The former part of my letter appeals to your reason, this last to your feelings. If, after having awakened that self-examination, which it is meant to excite, you can endure to persist in thus disappointing and grieving so kind a parent, and so worthy a man, I shall think I have mistaken the texture of your heart.

'Now, Henry, now the last reflection make,
What you must follow – what you must forsake!'

And, above all, whom you must afflict! Farewell.

DR. WHALLEY,

Lichfield, Aug. 6, 1795.

. . . Your matchless friend has been performing most of her celebrated characters at Birmingham. The dejecting nature of my bodily sensations counteracted the longings of my spirit after those sublime representations of high-strung feelings and conflicting passions, till I saw Mrs. Siddons announced for Hermione, and Catherine the Shrew. I could then resist no longer, much as I feared the exertion. She was, if possible, greater than ever, and I was very glad to observe her plumpness and healthier looks since I

saw her in Lady Macbeth this time three years. She sent me a thrice kind billet after the first act: a more welcome one I have seldom received, for I love, as well as admire her infinitely. I called at her door next morn, but it was the day of her leaving Birmingham, which made it impossible she should have leisure to see any person: so I left my billet of acknowledgment for her gratifying notice. On leaving the stage after her general curtsy, she made one to me with a smile of benignity, which is engraved on my heart. O, Mr. Whalley, what an enchanting Beatrice she is!

THE REV. HENRY WHITE, of Lichfield,
Barmouth, Sept. 7, 1795.

I resume my pen, to speak to you of that enchanting unique, in conduct and situation, of which you have heard so much, though, as yet, without distinct description. You will guess that I mean the celebrated ladies of Llangollen Vale¹, their mansion, and their bowers.

By their own invitation, I drank tea with them thrice during the nine days of my visit to Dinbren; and, by their kind introduction, partook of a rural dinner, given by their friend, Mrs. Ormsby, amid the ruins of Valle-Crucis, an ancient abbey, distant a mile and a half from their villa. Our party was large enough to fill three chaises and two phaetons.

We find the scenery of Valle-Crucis grand, silent, impressive, awful. The deep repose, resulting from

¹ The ladies of Llangollen were Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby. As one of them was being forced into an objectionable marriage, they escaped together from Ireland in 1776, bought a cottage in Llangollen Vale, and lived there for about fifty years, never leaving it for a single night and spending their time in reading, gardening and entertaining visitors. They wore semi-masculine attire and became one of the 'sights' of the age. Even the Duke of Wellington felt it necessary to round off his military career with a visit to the celebrated recluses. — H.P.

the high umbrageous mountains which rise immediately around these ruins, solemnly harmonizes with their ivied arches and broken columns. Our drive to it from the lovely villa leads through one of the most picturesque parts of the peerless vale, and along the banks of the classic river.

After dinner, our whole party returned to drink tea and coffee in that retreat, which breathes all the witchery of genius, taste, and sentiment. You remember Mr. Hayley's poetic compliment to the sweet miniature painter, Miers:

'His magic pencil, in its narrow space,
Pours the full portion of uninjur'd grace.'

So may it be said of the talents and exertion which converted a cottage, in two acres and a half of turnip ground, to a fairy-palace, amid the bowers of Calypso.

It consists of four small apartments; the exquisite cleanliness of the kitchen, its utensils, and its auxiliary offices, vieing with the finished elegance of the gay, the lightsome little dining-room, as that contrasts the gloomy, yet superior grace of the library, into which it opens.

This room is fitted up in the Gothic style, the door and large sash windows of that form, and the latter of painted glass, 'shedding the dim religious light'. Candles are seldom admitted into this apartment. — The ingenious friends have invented a kind of prismatic lantern, which occupies the whole elliptic arch of the Gothic door. This lantern is of cut glass, variously coloured, enclosing two lamps with their reflectors. The light it imparts resembles that of a volcano, sanguine and solemn. It is assisted by two glow-worm lamps, that, in little marble reservoirs, stand on the opposite chimney-piece, and these supply the place of the here always chastized day-light, when

the dusk of evening sables, or when night wholly involves the thrice-lovely solitude.

A large Eolian harp is fixed in one of the windows, and, when the weather permits them to be opened, it breathes its deep tones to the gale, swelling and softening as that rises and falls.

'Ah me! what hand can touch the strings so fine,
Who up the lofty diapason roll
Such sweet, such sad, such solemn airs divine,
And let them down again into the soul!'

This saloon of the Minervas contains the finest editions, superbly bound, of the best authors, in prose and verse, which the English, Italian, and French languages boast, contained in neat wire cases: over them the portraits, in miniature, and some in larger ovals, of the favoured friends of these celebrated votaries to that sentiment which exalted the characters of Theseus and Perithous, of David and Jonathan.

Between the picture of Lady Bradford and the chimney-piece hangs a beautiful entablature, presented to the ladies of Langollen Vale by Madam Sillery, late Madam Genlis. It has convex miniatures of herself and of her pupil, Pamela; between them, pyramidally placed, a garland of flowers, copied from a nosegay, gathered by Lady Eleanor in her bowers, and presented to Madam Sillery.

The kitchen-garden is neatness itself. Neither there, nor in the whole precincts, can a single weed be discovered. The fruit-trees are of the rarest and finest sort, and luxuriant in their produce; the garden-house, and its implements, arranged in the exactest order.

Nor is the dairy-house, for one cow, the least curiously elegant object of this magic domain. A short steep declivity, shadowed over with tall shrubs, conducts us to the cool and clean repository. The white and

shining utensils that contain the milk, and cream, and butter, are pure 'as snows thrice bolted in the northern blast'. In the midst, a little machine, answering the purpose of a churn, enables the ladies to manufacture half a pound of butter for their own breakfast, with an apparatus which finishes the whole process without manual operation.

The wavy and shaded gravel-walk which encircles this Elysium, is enriched with curious shrubs and flowers. It is nothing in extent, and every thing in grace and beauty, and in variety of foliage; its gravel smooth as marble. In one part of it we turn upon a small knoll, which overhangs a deep hollow glen. In its tangled bottom, a frothing brook leaps and clamours over the rough stones in its channel. A large spreading beech canopies the knoll, and a semilunar seat, beneath its boughs, admits four people. A board, nailed to the elm, has this inscription,

'O cara Selva! e Fiumicello amato!'

It has a fine effect to enter the little Gothic library, as I first entered it, at the dusk hour. The prismatic lantern diffused a light gloomily glaring. It was assisted by the paler flames of the petit lamps on the chimney-piece, while, through the opened windows, we had a darkling view of the lawn on which they look, the concave shrubbery of tall cypress, yews, laurels, and lilachs; of the woody amphitheatre on the opposite hill, that seems to rise immediately behind the shrubbery; and of the grey barren mountain which, then just visible, forms the back ground. The evening-star had risen above the mountain; the airy harp loudly rung to the breeze, and completed the magic of the scene.

You will expect that I say something of the enchantresses themselves, beneath whose plastic wand

these peculiar graces arose. Lady Eleanor is of middle height, and somewhat beyond the *embonpoint* as to plumpness; her face round and fair, with the glow of luxuriant health. She has not fine features, but they are agreeable; – enthusiasm in her eye, hilarity and benevolence in her smile. Exhaustless is her fund of historic and traditionary knowledge, and of every thing passing in the present eventful period. She has uncommon strength and fidelity of memory; and her taste for works of imagination, particularly for poetry, is very awakened, and she expresses all she feels with an ingenuous ardour, at which the cold-spirited beings stare. I am informed that both these ladies read and speak most of the modern languages. Of the Italian poets, especially of Dante, they are warm admirers.

Miss Ponsonby, somewhat taller than her friend, is neither slender nor otherwise, but very graceful. Easy, elegant, yet pensive, is her address and manner:

‘Her voice, like lovers watch’d, is kind and low.’

A face rather long than round, a complexion clear, but without bloom, with a countenance which, from its soft melancholy, has peculiar interest. If her features are not beautiful, they are very sweet and feminine. Though the pensive spirit within permits not her lovely dimples to give mirth to her smile, they increase its sweetness, and, consequently, her power of engaging the affections. We see, through their veil of shading reserve, that all the talents and accomplishments which enrich the mind of Lady Eleanor, exist, with equal powers, in this her charming friend.

Such are these extraordinary women, who, in the bosom of their deep retirement, are sought by the first characters of the age, both as to rank and talents. To preserve that retirement from too frequent invasion,

they are obliged to be somewhat coy as to accessibility.

When we consider their intellectual resources, their energy and industry, we are not surprised to hear them asserting, that, though they have not once forsaken their vale, for thirty hours successively, since they entered it seventeen years ago; yet neither the long summer's day, nor winter's night, nor weeks of imprisoning snows, ever inspired one weary sensation, one wish of returning to that world, first abandoned in the bloom of youth, and which they are yet so perfectly qualified to adorn.

Travelling hither, we found the country rising into yet bolder and sublimer beauty on our progress – the mountains more vast, and more magnificent than *night* of woods which generally clothes them; though sometimes they aspire the clouds in the grey grandeur of barrenness – while nothing was ever so richly umbrageous as the vales and the glens at their feet, interspersed with meads of the freshest verdure, and with rocks that thrust their craggy points, and lift their angular eminences, whose sterility finely contrasts the woody luxuriance of the general scene. The deva, always visible, and drawing his 'wizard waters' in lines of light, from his rising out of the Lake Bala, through the long track of beauteous vales, Llandynion, Landesillis, Valle-Crucis, and Langollen, extending at least twenty miles. So unpropitious, however, was the wet and cheerless day, that it was through shrouds of rainy mists that we but in part discerned this all-surpassing scenery beneath, as our road zoned the midway of the Alpine steeps which overhung it.

We slept at Bala the first night, that boasts her silver lake eleven miles in circumference. Another rainy morn – but it soon cleared up after we had resumed our journey. We found the road comparatively dreary during about eight miles; – the mountains

were vast, but uniformly barren, and the vales at their feet had little luxuriance; but during the remaining ten miles, that lead us to Dolgelly, romantic Beauty resumed all her empire, with the sublime addition of cataracts thundering down the rocks. These were the present of our late rains. One of them was super-eminent in grandeur and picturesque grace. In the dark recess of some immense and over-arching rocks, two large and roaring torrents met, which had descended from their sides, and spread wide sheets of snowy foam in the gloomy chasm.

Waiting for horses at Dolgelly till after five, they at last gave us tired ones; and I have since learned that they were stone-blind. A circumstance so cruel involved us in perils that might have appalled a stouter heart than mine. In the midway to Barmouth night overtook us. Then it was that our miserable horses refused to draw on every ascent, standing stock still, insensible alike to the coaxing or the lashes of the driver; and this though we always alighted, creeping on foot up every hill, with immense fatigue to me, and with terror inexpressible.

But for one fortunate circumstance, amid those wild and savage heights must we have passed the night, stunned with the din of unseen torrents, pouring down the rocks above – a noise which darkness rendered horrible – while intervening seas were breaking in at the feet of those precipices on whose edge we travelled. – Fortunately we met with two stout peasants, who, by our bribing high, were induced to accompany us to Barmouth, to assist the horses in dragging the empty chaise up the hills, and to walk between our horses and the precipices when we were in our vehicle. Luckily it did not rain, though the infant moon was shrouded in threatening blackness. The road, by day-light, is not very unsafe, though sufficiently alarming. It leads through magnificent scenery of rocks and woods.

interspersed with arms of the sea, and the ocean lying in front, – but the veil of night concealed its charms from us, and trebled all its dangers. Ah! how welcome the glimmering lights of the Barmouth windows. – It was eleven ere we arrived. From a projection of the rocks, there was no appearance of human habitation till we immediately descended into the town. Nothing, till then, could our wearied eyes discern through the gloom, but a vast ocean, howling and harbourless.

I must not conclude my letter without observing, that, on my second visit to the fairy palace, a lovely Being cast around its apartments the soft lunar rays of her congenial beauty. – Mrs. Tighe, the wife of one of my friend's nephews, an elegant and intelligent young gentleman, whom I should have observed more had his wife's beauty been less. I used the word *lunar* as characteristic of that beauty, for it is not resplendent and sunny, like Mrs. Plummer's, but, as it were, shaded, though exquisite. She is scarcely two and-twenty. Is it not too much that Aonian inspiration should be added to the cestus of Venus? She left an elegant and accurate sonnet, addressed to Lady E. Butler and her friend, on leaving their enchanting bowers.

Lady Cunliffe, of whom you have often heard me talk with delight, was here for a day or two the beginning of the week. We met as old friends. She is the same intelligent, interesting, amiable creature with whom I passed a month so pleasantly at Buxton in the autumn of 1784 – but eleven years have made some havock in her beauty; – unless the swart power of these fierce suns, exposed to them during several days, as she had been, in an open carriage, and the dust and dishabille of travelling, had greatly increased the tarnishing power of time. Seeing her now, you would say she was a very fine woman; but would scarcely conceive how divinely handsome she was at

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

the period above mentioned. Her lilies and roses are exchanged for the unblended flush of sun-burnt health. Ah! if my dear Honora, whom she then so strikingly resembled, had lived to this hour, she would probably have been as much, perhaps more, altered. It is these changes that make it so desirable to possess good pictures of our lovely friends, before time shall either fade or bronze them. If, like my sister and Honora, they die young, their beauty lives, in undecaying youth, in the memory of their contemporaries; but if they grow old by our side, we insensibly lose the distinct recollection of what they once were, without the assistance of the pencil.

This bright morning has risen upon me with better health on its wings. I have accepted the very kind offer of Mr. Wise and his engaging daughters, and am settled in delightful apartments, situate on an high terrace, that looks immediately down upon this vast mass of animated water. I sit writing at an open sash-window, inhaling its salubrious gales. The tide is flowing up, and rolls its green waves in light.

What mercifully fine weather is ripening the golden harvest that waves through our land! O! that to this gracious boon of Heaven, our rulers would endeavour to add the blessings of peace! – that, of all the allied powers, the English would not be the last to grow wise, and bid the sanguinary sword sleep in its scabbard!

J. WHYTE, Esq., of Dublin,
Lichfield, Nov. 27, 1795.

I perfectly remember Mrs. Cibber and Mrs. Pritchard, young as I was when I saw them, in all their capital characters, the last season of their performing. I have the most discriminating recollection of their different excellencies. Mrs. Cibber had very pathetic powers; her features, though not beautiful, were delicate and very expressive; but she uniformly pitched her

silver voice, so sweetly plaintive, in too high a key to produce that endless variety of intonation with which Mrs. Siddons declaims.

Mrs. Pritchard's voice was clear, distinct, and various; but her figure coarse and large, nor could her features, plain even to hardness, at least when I saw them, exhibit the witchery of expression. She was a just and spirited actress; a more perfectly good speaker than her more elegant, more fascinating contemporary.

Mrs. Siddons has all the pathos of Mrs. Cibber, with a thousand times more variety in its exertion; and she has the justness of Mrs. Pritchard; — while only Garrick's countenance could ever vie with her's in those endless shades of meaning, which almost make her charming voice superfluous; while the fine proportion and majesty of her form, and the beauty of her face, eclipse the remembrance of all her less consummate predecessors.

RIGHT HON. LADY ELEANOR BUTLER,

Lichfield, Dec. 9, 1795.

My memoir of the Peak Minstrel,¹ and poem addressed to him, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for March 1785, have had the honour to interest you and your charming friend in his destiny, and suggested your inquiry into his present situation. At the time that memoir and poem were written, or very soon after, he was articled for seven years, upon a salary of L.50 per annum, as machinery-carpenter in a cotton-mill, in beautiful Monsaldale, Derbyshire. Two years after, the mill was burnt, and he with difficulty escaped from its sudden and midnight conflagration. His tools, purchased gradually, and which cost him L.30, were consumed. — He was refused any compensation for them. Thus, with a wife and two children, he had the

¹ W. Newton.

world to begin again. I procured a few guineas for their present support.

That accident, which seemed so ruinous, will, I trust, prove the means of making his fortune. His known ingenuity in mechanics, his industry and fair moral character, induced some monied people, who were going to erect a cotton-mill in that neighbourhood, but, alas! in a situation dreary as the former was Edenic, to offer to admit him third partner, if he would undertake to construct its machinery, keep it in order, and could advance L.200 to the common-stock. An old godmother of his, who had boarded with his wife some years, and experienced from him the kindness of filial attention, sold, for this purpose, houses, which were her sole support, and which produced L.150. I lent him the remaining L.50, and he re-embarked in business, in the respectable station of cotton-manufacturer. The mill, to which he belongs, stood, amidst the commercial wreck of so many great houses in Manchester, about two years ago. All the Peak mills supply that town. A little before that dangerous crisis, he wrote to me that he had realized a thousand pounds in the concern; — a great sum for the short time he had been engaged in it. I find they are now going on very prosperously.

But for the destruction of the Monsaldale-mill, he would not have been at liberty to accept the advantageous proposals made to him. Yet, when that sad accident happened, he bewailed it as ruinous.

‘Oft from imagined ills our blessings flow.’

Most of us felt the earthquake in our little city, but few, at the instant, knew what it was. Happily for England, those dread convulsions of the earth, which, on the continent, disroot rocks, overturn mountains,

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

tilt oceans on the shores, as water poured from a basin,
and swallow up whole cities, —

‘But gently vibrate on her grassy bosom.’

MISS PONSONBY,

Lichfield, Dec. 29, 1795.

It may be old-fashioned to send Christmas compliments; yet the wish of my heart will not be restrained for many, very many, happy returns of this season to yourself and Lady Eleanor — this season, in which, the divine Shakespeare tells us,

‘The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
No ghost can walk, no witch hath power to harm,
So hallow’d, and so gracious is the time.’

I awoke at six on Christmas-day; and, on hearing the cocks of the neighbourhood cheerily answering each other, recollected that passage with thrills of delight. It chased the mists of slumber, so I rang for my fire and arose. My dressing-room windows look upon the cathedral area, which is a green lawn, encircled by prebendal houses, and they are rough-cast. The glimmer of the scene, through the dusk of a December morning at seven, produced the following sonnet, several years ago, from my pen:

I love to rise ere breaks the tardy light,
Winter’s pale day; and, as clear fires illume,
And cheerful tapers shine around the room,
Through misty windows bend my musing sight
Where, round the dusky lawn, the mansions white,
With shutters clos’d, peer faintly through the
gloom,
That slow recedes; while yon grey spires assume,
Rising from their dark pile, an added height,

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

By indistinctness given; – then to decree
The rising thoughts to Heaven, ere they unfold
To Friendship, or the Muse; or seize with glee
Wisdom's rich page! – O hours, more worth than
gold,
By whose blest use we lengthen life, and, free
From drear decays of age, outlive the old!

MISS WINGFIELD,

Lichfield, Feb. 22, 1796.

Your silence excited no cold suspicion of diminished regard. I am not apt to suspect, upon trivial circumstances, a cessation of attachment which has been voluntarily avowed by characters complexioned like that of dear Miss Wingfield.

Our winter is indeed mild in the extreme. My memory, a pretty faithful register of times and seasons, presents me with nothing resembling it since 1779, when the rugged despot of the year chose, as now, to walk with a soft step, and place a vernal garland on his brow.

I cannot boast of having lost my bosom-pain. Its return upon the least increased chillness in the atmosphere, makes me apprehend that I am indebted rather to this skiey-lenience, than to any great decrease in the complaint itself, for having been considerably less annoyed by it than I was last winter. I then literally seemed to feel the invisible darts of those severe frosts, piercing through all the shields of fur and flannel with which I tried to defend my bosom, whenever I turned, even for a moment, from the fire. But the whitloes which, this time twelvemonth, and two years, brought the nails, one by one, off my fingers, have within the past three months, much more cruelly attacked those of my feet, imprisoning me to my chair or couch during a fortnight, at three different periods. I remained in

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

this 'durance vile' near half of the six weeks, in which dear Miss Arden was my guest. Her sprightly converse beguiled the hours of pain and languor.

.

We have balls too, but they come not thick and threefold like yours. I am one of the creatures that love not balls in general, at least such as have been used to at Lichfield; but I subscribed this winter, because I like the manner in which they are now conducted. Mrs. B. Proby, who was a Miss Gresley, does the honours of the evening, as Lady President, with grace and attention; without any foolish display of aristocratic partiality in her civilities, which are equally, and with the true dignity of the gentlewoman, extended to every body. Mr. and Mrs. Arden of Sutton, and their pretty cousin Miss Venner, come to the ball of to-morrow evening, and will be my guests. I shall accompany them thither.

.

Earthquakes and mad-dogs have been the terrible graces of this sky-gentle winter; the latter much the most formidable evil, and so frequent, that every body was afraid to walk the streets. Several people have been bit, and had instant recourse to the knife. I hope success will reward the resolution, and avert the direst calamity imaginable; but the apprehensions, alas! what can avert them? Earthquakes, so terrible in other countries, but slightly jar and momentarily alarm our isle and its inhabitants. Who knows but that we lately experienced may have given us a shove to the south, which may have produced the present mild season, and may prevent the speedy return of such Hybernal asperities as produced the mischiefs last year, of frost and inundation, pregnant with political as well as climatic misfortune to England?

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

THE RIGHT HON. LADY ELEANOR BUTLER,
Lichfield, Feb. 28, 1796.

I beg your Ladyship's pardon for my forgotten promise of reading *Celestina*. To be sure, the name did completely sicken me. What a vain fool must a parent be who could in reality give such a name to an infant girl! who could hope that the beauty and virtues of the so presumptuously christened could be in such excess as not to burlesque the appellation! – *Celestina*!!! – how silly! The author will find it difficult to recompense me for such a true coxcomby title. We have a pompous man in this town, meanly born, and meanly educated, and low in fortune, who christened his son Augustus.

CHRIS. SMYTHE, Esq.,
Lichfield, April 7, 1796.

I thought myself honoured in the Duke¹ and Mr. Mitchel's visit to me at Lichfield, in an abode which, though a mansion pleasant and spacious to my utmost wish, breathes of nothing above the level of mere common and stileless life. They were here on our grotesque Whitsun-Monday anniversary, connected, time immemorial, with the charter of our city. – It is the vulgar jubilee of the town and its environs. Guns are fired over every house; – gaudy morris-dancers caper in the thronged streets; – emblematic figures, and garlands, are carried on poles; – meat, cakes, and wine, are given gratis, under awnings; – drums, and tabors, and fiddles, are dinning amid the crowd,

'And all is riot and rude merriment.'

I am much gratified, though surprised at the too flattering mention made to you of this visit by the

¹ Of Somerset.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

young Duke. I always immure myself at home through that day, and my domestics leave me, to partake of amusements better suited to their taste than mine. Languor and pain hung about me with incapacitating influence. I wonder his Grace did not ask you how you could endure to write to, or converse with, such an antiquated dowdy.

THOMAS PARKE, ESQ.,

Lichfield, May 9, 1796.

You say I have doubtless seen all the reviews that mention my Langollen Vale publication. — No, indeed, by no means all — nor even any by voluntary inquiry. I never hunt out reviews of my own writings, nor of my favourite compositions from other pens. For mine, I desire not to trouble myself about what is just as likely to be an abuse as praise, even if I wrote as well as Gray. Just and well-discriminating criticism on poetry, is even more rare than original and beautiful poetic writing.

I know how much the decision of reviewers affects the sale of a composition; — but since authors, who are above attempting to bribe, or in any degree influence them, cannot help themselves, there is no good in ruminating, or ever once looking at the injustice or stupidity of spiteful or incompetent critics. I have, therefore, constantly desired my friends not to obtrude any such upon my attention.

If my poems are of that common order which have, as Falstaff says, a natural alacrity in sinking, the praise of hireling and nameless critics would not keep them above the gulf of oblivion. If, on the contrary, they possess the buoyant property of true poetry, their fame will be established in after years, when no one will ask, What said the reviewers?

MISS PONSONBY,

The Crescent, Buxton, Aug. 7, 1796.

My dear Madam, - Always gratified and honoured by your letters, I received the last with augmented pleasure, by the dispersion of solicitude. That attention which yourself and excellent Lady Eleanor are so good to express for my health, seduces me into the egotism of making it my earliest theme. I left Lichfield on the 24th of last month, passing three days, on my road hither, with Mr. and Mrs. Sneyd of Belmont. Their scene is of romantic and noble features, mountainous and sylvan. The changed, and perhaps purer air, seemed instantly salutary to me; nor has that of Buxton been less propitious, even amidst these gales of ungenial chillness, that whistle through the arcade, and the drizzling clouds, that draw, from day to day, their dark trains over the mountains.

Buxton is growing very full, notwithstanding this unnatural weather. I now sit writing by a good fire, in very commodious lodgings. My neat light parlour looks backwards, is on the first flight of stairs, and, from its aspect, is quiet and silent. When I close one of the sash-windows, that looks on the superb stables, which are built on the rise of the hill, above this splendid, this golden half-moon, the other window shows me only a sloping range of bare fields, without hedge or tree, and intersected by stone-walls. They present a perfect picture of a barren country, of rudeness, silence, and solitude. I am gratified by meditating the striking contrast, when, quitting this apartment, half a minute conveys me into the 'busiest hum of men;' amid a crowd of old and young, grave and gay, feeble and frolicksome, blighted and blooming, that sweep, in long trains, through the arcade; while, in the area of its concave, horses and horsemen

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

are prancing, and chariots and phaetons swiftly roll.

MR. SAVILLE,

Buxton, August 8, 1796.

THANK you, dear friend, for your welcome letter of this morning – but I grieve to find that the enervating days return so often. O! that the ocean breezes and billows may give you strength to repel these lamentably frequent invasions. I mourn, and most for your sake, the strange continuance of that unnatural weather, which long so severely balanced the winter's mildness. What would have become of the harvest, if the sun had persevered in his sullenness?

I have here great plenty of very pleasant society, and have received flattering attentions from many interesting and elegant strangers in this motley throng; but dear Lady Lawley's kindness to me, gratifies what I hope is a much better thing than my vanity – for my heart values on experience, the excellence of her understanding, the integrity of her principles, and the benevolence of her heart; – and the lovely and fascinating Mrs. Powys of Berwick! – you know how I have admired and loved her, since the blended dignity and sweetness of her manners, the cultivation of her mind, and the apparent softness of her heart, first charmed me, at Lichfield, this time two years.

Certainly my acquaintance here seem to set a far higher value on my talents and conversation, such as they are, than the Lichfieldians; – but it is more than probable, that novelty is the cause of this so much more appreciating attention. In an intercourse so transient, that to-day is, and will next week perhaps cease for ever, the passions of jealousy, envy, and ill-will, have not time to arise, or if arisen, to gather strength by habit and daily nurture. The homage of this attention, therefore, neither beguiles my reason,

or counteracts my experience. I know human nature is everywhere, in a great degree at least, the same; that by frequent intercourse the value of talents, somewhat above the common level, is first lessened in the estimation of every-day minds, who can so readily attain that intercourse; and that, when lessened, such minds become jealous and indignant from seeing others pay the tribute of respect, which is ever largely paid to abilities that are at all distinguished, on an early introduction to them, before repetition has blunted the appetite for intellectual emanations, or the hourly recurrence of conscious inferiority has created and nursed latent dislike. But amongst this motley group, I have been honoured with the notice of many people of rank, and of others whose talents have the widest celebrity. I am in a society which makes me vexedly feel the rapid flight of those weeks, whose period must close an intellectual intercourse very gratifying. I converse with Mr. Wilberforce,¹ who disappoints no expectation his imputed eloquence had excited – with the luminous and resistless Erskine,² whose every sentence is oratory, whose form is graceful, whose voice is music, and whose eye lightens as he speaks.

That resemblance to Mrs. Fitzherbert, with which I have been so variously, so repeatedly flattered, was observed by the polite, obliging, and agreeable Lady

¹ William Wilberforce, 1759–1833, the great slave emancipator, who started life as a gambler and ended it as a puritan. "Though profoundly convinced of the corruption of human nature in general, he loved almost every particular human being," and was buried in Westminster Abbey. – H.P.

² Thomas Erskine, 1750–1823, a famous whig advocate, orator and wit, who became Lord Chancellor. His vanity was on a level with his courage, for while ready to sacrifice anything for popularity he actually sacrificed his office for defending Thomas Paine. For recreations he wrote *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* by heart and specialised in puns. – H.P.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

Harewood, last night, who has taken me to each assembly since I had first the honour of her notice.

So I think I will even go to Brighton instead of Harrowgate, to see if I cannot rival Lady Jersey, by recalling former impressions, and make a certain personage behave better to his amiable and lovely wife. Would not that be a nice piece of amorous knight or rather knightess errantry? My autumnalities would scarcely be an objection to a taste so partial to mellow fruit. It is a sign I am better for Buxton, thus to jest upon my feeble fame, and arrogate to it, though but in sport, a royal conquest.

A week ago, we had a sudden transition from hybernal coldness to skies of cloudless blaze. Phœbus shakes his fiery tresses on the rocks, and over the wide-stretched mountains, that girdle this vale and its golden Crescent. The busy little world, that swarms in the Arcade and its precincts, now gasp beneath a climate, which I should suppose somewhat resembles the description of Mulciber's gilded palace in Pandemonium. The aspect of the Crescent is south-east. Its colonnade drinks the morning beams, and reflects them back with dazzling and oppressive force. Those to whom the lines of Milton are familiar, might be inclined to exclaim,

... "The torrid walls, vaulted with fire,
Smite on their dazzled eyes."

As for you, you are a salamander, and no atmosphere can be too glowing — besides, you have the ocean breezes. Adieu!

MRS. PRICE,

Harrowgate, Sept. 1, 1796.

I AM indebted to you, my dear Madam, for a kind letter, precious from its sympathy with my feelings,

and interesting from that which it creates with yours.

You know it was my purpose to go to Harrowgate this summer. A rheumatic weakness, and pain in my ancles, induced me to try a previous residence at Buxton. Though I staid there a month, I am not sensible of much benefit in the disorder for which I went thither; yet my general health must have been strengthened by drinking the waters and bathing, or I could not have supported the gay and hurrying life I led there. Fancying I should find myself an utter stranger at Buxton, how little did I divine the many old acquaintance I should meet, the many new ones I should form! Rather full when I arrived, the crowds soon augmented to swarming numbers. The balls to which I subscribed and constantly attended, were very brilliant. I frequently went to them in Lady Harewood's party, once Lady Fleming, to whom I was introduced by my long dear and esteemed Lady Lawley. Lady Harewood is a second Madam D'Enclos, as to grace and agility of form and fashionable appearance in advanced life. She has an extreme fine person, and her manners are charming, easy, polite, animated, conciliating.

Miss Mildred Lawley was the pride of the ball-room. Except on the opera stage, I never saw any woman dance half so well. Her steps, skilful and curiously varied, are free, bounding, and exactly responsive to the music. She seems to tread on air – and shames the silly compliance of some of her fair competitors with a late absurd edict of that fool Fashion, who bids them, perhaps irrecoverably, sacrifice all the grace of their dancing to what is called the *partridge run*. It gives one the idea of their legs being tied together, and fighting in vain under their petticoats, to escape from the awkward bondage, beneath which the whole frame shakes as in an ague-fit. We

may observe to such, as we are gazing delighted on Miss Lawley,

'Learn the grace with which she strays,
Thro' the light fantastic maze!'

while on her open and joyous countenance, we see no trace of solicitude for the eclat of her steps.

Mrs. Childers and I renewed the acquaintance of our teens, which had began at Shrewsbury, in that jocund morning of our youth. We have not met since. She was then the blooming and pretty Sally Fowler of Ascham. Time has trod so lightly over her fair face, and yet elegant form, as to have left few traces of depredation, while naturally fine talents, and energy of disposition, did not suffer him to pass in vain over her mind, but snatched from his wings the stores of intellectual cultivation. Hence the charms of brilliant wit, of classic and historic allusion, inspirit her conversation, while the fairest domestic virtues render her estimable. A month's daily intercourse, and frequent confidential tete-à-tetes, have made our acquaintance friendship.

The enchanting Mr. Erskine honoured me with frequent attentions in the ball-rooms, and with frequent visits at my lodgings, where he often met the excellent and distinguished Mr. Wilberforce, and Mr. Wilberforce's friend, the ingenious Dean of Carlisle. It was a triumvirate of eloquence. Their different politics drew forth their mutual powers, very amicably exerted. They were in my parlour the day before I came away, from eleven till one in the morning; from six till nine in the evening. Mrs. Childers shared with me the whole of that mental banquet, and other company in turn dropt in. — It was an Attic day.

I am now at Harrowgate — O! what a change! the scene of the Green Dragon, to whom I had written

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

for accommodations, and who had replied that he would do the best for me he could, said, when I arrived, that he had tried in vain - Harrowgate was so full, he could not procure me even a single lodging-room. Thus cruelly disappointed, I had recourse to the people of the Granby hotel, upon whom, not having written to them, I had no claim. They made me the same reply; but, with more humanity, seeing my distress, sent about to the lodging-houses, and at last, with much difficulty, got for me a single bed-chamber, with a smaller one within for my maid, a quarter of a mile from their hotel, from whence I am to have my food sent. This room, vacant only from its meanness and inconvenience, was damp, and I have caught a violent feverish cough, and inflammation on my lungs, disabling me from going to the hotel. If this disorder, to which I am subject, remains upon me with its usual violence and obstinacy, it will force me to return home very soon. I shall abandon the probable benefit of the waters with regret, but shall feel none for not having presented myself in a crowded society of fine people, amongst whom I am not conscious of a single acquaintance.

Here is scarce room for an adieu; but your confidence in my affection will supply the deficiencies of my exhausted paper.

THE RIGHT HON. LADY ELEANOR BUTLER,

Mansfield Woodhouse, Sept. 19, 1796.

DEAREST Lady Eleanor, what a touching, what an unhappy narrative does your last obliging letter contain! Lamentable is the malady of the amiable visionary, whose imagination has fatally soared above the limits of her reason, and, like the chariot-wheel, taken baleful fire from the rapidity of its course.

Mr. Saville and his daughter have, I imagine, by

this time exchanged the Welsh coast for Mr. Roberts' sublime mountain, and have perhaps enjoyed the envied happiness of paying their glad duty at the Arcadian court of Langollen.

Your Ladyship's kind and desired letter found me at Harrowgate, labouring under the paroxysms of a fierce cough, the luckless present of damp and inconvenient lodgings, which the neglect of the landlord at the Green Dragon Hotel, and the overflowing crowds in all the other houses, public and private, had made my dernier resort.

The morning after my arrival, finding myself much disordered, I resigned my purpose of going to the Granby for my meals, determining to send for my food from thence, and trying to combat my disease by quiet and regularity. My apartment itself, when it became aired, was not uncomfortable, but tolerably clean, spacious, and very lightsome, from a large sash window, which looked upon some pleasant retired fields; with a side view of the heathy-moor, round which the three hotels, the better lodging-houses, the theatre, and the shops, are thinly dotted, and over which pranced the horses and carriages, and walking parties of those gay crowds that swarmed in the hotels. My room was part of an house which had seen better days, once the Salutation Hotel, now occupied, in division, by handicraft workmen.

There, during an whole week, I lived, unknowing and unknown, in a seclusion never in my whole preceding life experienced. A total solitude on the very verge of so busy a little world, pleased me at once by its novelty, and by the leisure it gave me. The numbers passing to and fro on one side, seemed as figures in a magic lantern. I was very much disordered, it is true, yet, by quiet and nursing, not so ill as to be insensible to the luxury of uninterrupted leisure, and abstract contemplation. I had some

books with me, and also the task of making a copy for the press of my centenary of sonnets, and of my twenty-five paraphrases of the *Odes of Horace*. As the Spa was a long mile distant, I had the water brought me every morning in bottles. I rose at seven, and swallowed, at intervals of twenty minutes between each draught, three half pints of that superlatively nauseous fluid, impregnated with salt and sulphur, that makes it taste like putrid eggs. By the medical people of the place, it is prohibited during a cold; but, from the nature of the operation, I knew that to be professional and local cant, adopted for the purpose of detaining strangers. My cough was always softened by it during several ensuing hours, and it entirely averted those pangs in my head, always, till then, the concomitants of catarrhs with me.

In the periods between swallowing those odious potations, I walked in the pleasant solitary fields which my chamber windows fronted. The busy throng of the circular heath, from whence these fields diverge, never approached. At morn and noon, the sun looked silently on their pathways and hedges; a silence unbroken, except by the lowing of the cattle and the warble of the redbreast.

Much did I enjoy those placid contemplative walks from the edge of that whirling vortex, into which, approaching it, I glanced without one wish to enter. In the sharp and often frosty evenings, which were then become somewhat long, I sat by my lonely, yet cheerful fire, without finding them tedious.

Thus was my disorder kept at bay an whole week, during which I did not once inquire who were the distinguished luminaries of the busy sphere so near me, nor suspected that it contained a single acquaintance; but, at the week's end, brilliant Lady Glencairn, with whom I had the honour of passing an hour three years ago, the sister of Mr. Erskine in spirit, as well as in

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

blood, wrote to express joy in the just received intelligence of my being in Harrowgate, and concern for my indisposition, and her intention to call upon me. The charm of Lady G.'s society was a temptation I could not resist; but, allured by the friendly offer of constant access to her parlour, I sacrificed that retirement, so necessary till the crisis of my disease was past, and ventured, the four ensuing days, to dine at the hotel. The immense crowd of the public table, the heat, the noise, were more than I could sustain without perceivable injury, increased by the cold walks home to my lodgings, at nine every evening. The afternoons were passed in private with Lady Glencairn and a few of her friends; yet notwithstanding the intellectual sun which gilded that little city of refuge, as we used to call Lady Glencairn's parlour, my illness increased rapidly, and induced a sudden resolution, the fifth morning of these days of gratified mind and fevered body, to fly, while flight should be in my power. — So terminated my expedition to Harrowgate.

My cough and fever abated beneath the influence of travelling in very fine days, which shone brightly upon my residence at Chesterfield. The autumnal fogs, heavy and dense, seem now beginning to gather. At present, they roll away towards noon — but probably the sun will soon lose his power to dissipate them and to gild the embowering shades by which I am now veiled; while the society of their mistress, one of the oldest of my friends, has kindness and intelligence which might illuminate the darkest hours of winter.

I have the honour to remain, &c.

MR. SAVILLE,

Mansfield Woodhouse, Sept. 19, 1796.

I THANK God for the hitherto safe course of a journey ~~now~~ now bends homewards. Ever welcome is that consciousness; for pleasant are my domestic bowers,

and dear are the friends whose society gilds them. Yesterday evening, by six, I arrived at rural Woodhouse, the village of acknowledged beauty, and was welcomed with all that energetic affection, which has ever marked good Mrs. Mompessan's attachment to me.

By this time, I trust you, and your fair syren, are breathing the pure gales of our friends Mr. and Mrs. Roberts' sublime mountain,

'High towering in Langollen's beauteous vale.'

I have said its air, compared to that of flatter countries, is as the taste of Pyrmont to common water. O! that its effect may be salubrious to you, augmenting the benefits of coast-residence!

When I arose, at seven this morning, the sun was veiled in heavy autumnal mists. By eight, they rolled away, and the orb looked out in golden beauty. I hastened to ascend the steep little lawn, that immediately rises from the low-roofed, but pleasant old mansion, and at whose top commences the pretty shrubbery which winds, as I have before described to you, round a field of about two acres.

Inclined, however, to Dr. Ingenhouz's system, I fear the whole of this scene is somewhat too luxuriantly embowered to make the mansion, which stands low, perfectly healthy, especially at this season,

'When the less wholesome gales of autumn blow,
And shake the ripe fruit from the bending bough.'

The breath of decaying vegetables must be pernicious, when blending too profusely with that of the horizon; but I hope I shall not perceive any bad effects from that circumstance, though my lungs must be in a tender and irritable state, from the fierce cough which has agitated them during the last three weeks.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

I passed ten days very agreeably at Chesterfield, with my friends Doctor and Mrs. Stokes; though my spirits were often painfully depressed by the consciousness of being surrounded with unhappy sufferers, who, in the direst of all human diseases, cancer, were assembled there, allured by the reputation of an American physician, Dr. Tete, now resident in that town, having been sent for across the Atlantic by a Chesterfield gentleman to his beloved wife, labouring under its baleful influence. Dr. Tete either has, or pretends to have, a medical secret, of powerful efficacy to expel that venom from the blood; but numbers have died under his experiments, and all have suffered so severely, that I think nothing could induce me to become his patient, though he has dismissed some few, whom, with setons in the diseased part, which are to be kept open some months, he declares cured, and they countenance that declaration. I conversed frequently, during my stay at Chesterfield, with several of his patients, who seemed full of hope and dependence upon his skill, and warmly desirous of increasing the number of those who commit themselves to the power of his nostrum, merciless as it is. As for me, though I have found the pains resulting from my accident, March was two years, so obstinate, and frequent in their recurrence, yet, at least while the regular physicians and surgeons declare their belief that these pains are not of the dreaded nature, it would be madness in me to rush blindly into torturing experiments, without faith in their power to save, and merely from the persuasions of boundless credulity, that, by the influence of hope, smiles beneath its pangs.

On Saturday, a Mr. and Mrs. Jebb, cousin of the present Sir Richard Jebb, and of the late amiable and distinguished Dr. John Jebb, took Mrs. Stokes and myself in their carriage to pay an interesting visit to the father of Mr. Jebb, living in a little Eden of his

own creation, some two miles from Chesterfield. Every tree of those woods that curtain his swelling hill, was planted by his own hands. If this venerable gentleman lives till February twelvemonth, he will have completed his century, and if he lives till February three years, he will have have lived in three centuries. He is the greatest wonder of intelligence so nearly centennial, that perhaps ever existed; for he has no chimeras in his brain, like the Lichfield wonder, old Fletcher, and his memory is perfectly sound, not only concerning long past, but very recent transactions. It is within the last year only, that his limbs are become too feeble to walk farther than across the room. Till then, he maintained the habit, which commenced on his retiring from business to this rural retreat, fifty years ago, the habit of rising at five during the spring, summer, and autumnal months, and, 'with his pipe in his mouth, walking stoutly over his hill, and lending new perfumes to the breath of the morning;' continuing his walk, when the weather permitted, near two hours. His teeth are all gone, and their desertion has impaired his utterance a little, but he is neither defective in sight, or hearing, in any marked degree.

I cannot express with what an awed tenderness I was affected, when this very reverend personage rose, with mild grace, to receive me. He is a perfect Nestor in eloquence. 'Madam,' said he, 'I am glad to see you. - I remember your father a sprightly bachelor. - I travelled down from London with him, when he went to take possession of the living of Eyam. He was a *lovely* man, of a fine person and frank communicative spirit. Soon after that period, he married a beautiful young Lady, your mother, Madam. Mr. Seward, as you know, had travelled, and spoke admirably of the customs and manners of foreign nations.'

I wept with pleasure at this testimony of respect, this justice to my father's memory, from a character

thus venerable. He indulged my inquiries after the habits of a life protracted to that uncommon length, and so singularly illuminated by the duration of the mental powers.

'Madam, I was not naturally a strong man; — so feeble till sixteen, that my mother despaired of my arriving at manhood. The virulent disorder that fled about me, settled in my hand about that period, and obliged me to suffer this amputation (extending his left hand) of my fore-finger. After that time I had no violent disease, but I was never strong, never enjoyed robust health; — neither was I at any time guilty of excesses; nor eat nor drunk immoderately; abstained from meat suppers; went early to rest, and rose early; was seldom out of my bed at ten in the evening, or in it after five in the fine seasons, or after seven in the winter, and dined at two o'clock. I am glad I was not born in this strange, unnatural period, in which all the great and wealthy, and most of the middle ranks of life, like their own ways better than God's ways; — exhaust themselves by sitting up and revelling through the night, and enervate themselves by late, and some by noon-tide slumberings. Madam, they shut their eyes upon the flush and resplendence of the day; rob their bodies of the strengthening power of the early and fresh gales, and their minds of the pleasure of watching the joyous comforts, which the fresh and bright hours diffuse upon the animal world, that act under instinct. It was always my delight to see the busy birds collecting their food for themselves and for their young, with gay industry; — to hearken to their songs, and to the lowings of the cattle at early day, and to imagine them hymns to God of thankfulness and praise.'

Here was an old man of ninety-eight! — who thus poured on my charmed ear, though in the tremulous and piping tones of second personal childhood, the

blended oratory of an elevated imagination, and a feeling and pious heart.

He told me also, that it had been his annual custom, till this year, that he thought himself too infirm for the attempt, to take a summer's journey, either to Matlock, Buxton, Cheltenham, or some of the coasts. 'Last year, Madam,' continued he, 'on the 21st of August, I set out for Scarborough, and there breathed the sea-air in my carriage, during twenty days. I always thought those journeys renovated my aged body, and the sea-air revived me last year.'

I asked after the quantity and the nature of his liquor. — 'When I grew very old, the physicians ordered me three glasses of white-wine after dinner, and three after supper; but of late years, I have drank only two after dinner, and not any after supper.'

'By a physician's order, Sir, did you lessen the quantity of vinous fluid at so advanced a period of life?'

'Yes, Madam, by that of a very able physician, — Dr. Experience.'

Observe the quickness, as well as good sense of the reply; there could be no parrotism. — O! that it would please God so to lengthen your days, my friend!

'To age, thus melting in scarce felt decay,
Gliding in modest innocence away.'

I am convinced, the sensibility and piety of your heart would administer similar cordials of grateful and happy sympathy, with the felicity which results to instinctive creation from the bounties of its Maker; — and surely such cordials are highly propitious to the vital powers. They are the wine of the spirit, and the exhilaration they inspire strengthens while it stimulates. No baneful lassitude succeeds their inebriation. But I fear you will never have resolution to acquire

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

the habit of ten o'clock retreat, and of early rising, so essential to health, in declining life particularly.

Bracing and restorative is the fresh morning air, and salutary are the slumbers which precede the midnight. I wish we could all learn to live naturally – we should then live happier, better, and longer.

MRS. CHILDERS, of Cantly Lodge, Yorkshire,
Lichfield, Oct. 10, 1796.

I AM happy, dearest Madam, in performing that promise, which resulted from the most animated and interesting impressions. Your society was the sweetest spell that enchanted my residence at Buxton. It will influence me long, – yes, always.

Did Mr. Erskine tell you of our accidental encounter on the Chatsworth road, half a mile from Middleton, on the morning I left the golden Crescent, through which you and I so often walked together. I believed him in that gay throng, and he thought me much farther on my way to Sheffield, which I had forsaken to visit an old servant. After staying with her an hour, my wheels were retracing their wandering course through those lanes, where rocks and cliffs, covered with dwarf-wood, rise from the curving Derwent, that foams at their base.

I said to my maid, – What an elegant figure is that gentleman approaching us, who, loitering with a book, now reads and now holds the volume in a dropt hand, to contemplate the fine views on his right! There seems mind in every gesture, every step; – and how like Mr. Erskine!

A few seconds converted resemblance into reality. After a mutual exclamation, the graceful Being stopt the chaise, opened the door, and putting one foot on the step, poured all his eloquence upon a retrospect of the hours we had passed together at Buxton; illuminating, as he flatteringly said, one of those seldom

intervals of his busy life, in which his mind was left to enjoy, undisturbed, the luxury of intellectual intercourse.

A sudden scheme of the preceding night to go to Chatsworth that day, with Mrs. and Miss Erskine, and a large party; and they being obliged to wait at Middleton for some returning horses, induced him to beguile the hour of waiting by that ramble, which had given us such an unexpected interview.

When people have any cordiality towards each other, such interventions of chance are right pleasant. At the instant they act upon the spirits like wine; and, as time rolls on, their recollection gilds the mind, as sun-beams a placid lake.

The weather was extremely fine on my two days journey to Harrogate. You know how rich the prospects upon the confines of Yorkshire. Landscape is always exquisite in the tracks which intervene betwixt the barren grandeur of a mountainous country, and the rankly lavish vegetation of a flat one. It acquires a sufficient portion of the luxuriance of the last, before it has lost the majesty of the former. Our harvest, exuberant beyond what I had ever seen, was in its ripe glory. The dark woods on the yet in a degree mountainous hills, waved over vast fields, whose yellow and bearded ears, undulating to the gales, seemed lakes of fluid amber – while in others already reapt, the jocund sheaves stood like youthful couples marshalling for the dance; – and, on the green sloping uplands, the corn, sown in stripes, gave me the idea of gold lace on the borders, and up the seams of a birth-night beau in the olden time, ere fashion had spurned that splendid distinction. Thus did I amuse myself in forming fanciful resemblances for the bounty of Ceres, seldom more wanted, and never more plenteous.

At three on Saturday, we arrived at the gate of

Harewood Park, and found a *silver* key to open it. The drive from thence to the house, as you probably well know, involves some of the most beautiful part of that scenery, consecrated by poetic description in Mason's *Elfrida*. You are conscious as myself, how to minds, alive to the powers of poetry – to recollection that glows with its recorded graces, it can inspirit the contemplation of those actual scenes it has described, and, describing, has rendered classic ground. – It is the poet's triumph. That evening, the poignancy of my sensations rendered it eminently his, who reposes on his immortal laurels in the bowers of Aston. As Harewood's glassy waters shone through tangled brakes in the glens, or, expanded into lake, slept on the lawn, I repeated to myself the lovely passages that paint the landscape, or allude to its beauties, in that fine dramatic poem.

You will conceive with what comparative sobriety of spirit I surveyed the artificial splendours of the seventeen state-rooms in Harewood House. Fine apartments have little charm for me, if genius has not storied the walls. One pleasing sensation rose above the placid level of that survey, when the graceful portrait of the Dowager Lady Harewood caught my eye, who had been so kindly obliging to me on my recent abode at Buxton. It resembles her strongly, amidst all the flattery of its lineaments and colouring. Her form it scarcely could flatter, though it has veiled on her face the depredations of time.

Ah! I have this moment heard that dear Lady Glencairn, whom I left rejoicing in letters of health from her Lord, received an express, in a few days after we parted, announcing his dangerous illness at Edinburgh. The papers of last week, they tell me, announced his death. My heart mourns for her – for she loved him. – Melancholy impermanence of human blessings! Adieu, dear Mrs. Childers – lasting as lively be your happiness!

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

MISS ARDEN,

Lichfield, Dec. 17, 1796.

My dear Miss Arden's letter breathes an air of hope, comfort, and even gaiety, that charms me. Some amendment in her beloved brother's health, was, I know, the sun from whence those rays were imparted.

By Mrs. Ibetson's pencil, and your accurate description of the scenes and society by which you are surrounded, and of the apartments you inhabit, I am, in imagination, completely at Greenwich. Assure yourselves, dear friends, that inclination will not be wanting to place me there in reality.

Lichfield news! — you say you thirst for it; and want to know all the new attachments that dawn and ripen in our vicinage. As for your thirst — the well is very dry. It is true, we have softened the austerity of winter, as the sweet Akenside describes:

'Hence the loud city's busy throngs,
Urge the warm bowl, and cheerful fire,
Harmonious dances, festal songs,
Against the rage of Heaven conspire;'

but I do not find that these gay meetings have collected many combustibles for the Hymeneal torch. On returning home from my summer's excursion, I found the B— family established in the late Mr. Grove's habitation — know not if they mean to settle here totally, but they are, at least, stationary for the winter. They are much liked. Three fashionable young women, who seem belonging to us, much enliven the public walk and the ball-room. Meeting them chiefly in large companies, I can speak only of exteriors. The eldest, of middle height, is more graceful than handsome; the second, Miss Catherine, tall and well made, except the singular blemish of the left arm

being discernibly shorter than the right. Her features are fine, her profile perfectly Grecian, and strongly resembling the lovely Lady Fielding, but less beautiful, from great inferiority of complexion, and from the absence of that bloom that kindles on Lady Fielding's cheek, like an orient morning of May. Miss Harriet B., the youngest of the three graces, is called extremely handsome. Her dark-blue eyes, of the Sir Peter Lely shape, with the finest possible chestnut eye-lashes and eye-brows, are uncommonly lovely; then is she snowy fair – but also snowy pale, and with a countenance which strikes me as snowy cold. We look in vain for those sweet know-not-whats about the mouth, which, if they could be found, as they are found about the lips of Mrs. E. Sneyd, would give resistless fascination to the most charming eyes in the world, – but there they are not, in mercy to the hearts of mankind. She has an hereditary claim to conciliatory smiles. They render her father charming at sixty-five. Mrs. Burton is out of health, but sprightly and agreeable.

Graceful Bob Lovelace, as you call Sir R. W—, has not appeared at any of our balls, nor anywhere else in the neighbourhood, that I hear of. You rally me for praising him, and ask how many franks he has given me. A couple, which he gave me at Buxton, can hardly be supposed to have bribed my partiality. No, his charities! – his noble behaviour to Mr. Erskine at Buxton, and the high terms in which the good and devout Mrs. Price, who has known him from a child, speaks of him; – these things induced me to believe that he is not a libertine upon principle, though he paid so dear for having been drawn, in early youth, into the snares of a wanton beauty, who violated with him her nuptial vow. Ask your darling, your truly excellent brother, if that frailty is incompatible with goodness of heart in the male sex – where the man is seduced, not the seducer?

You ask if I have seen Spencer's *Leonora*, with engravings by Lady D. Beauclerk? Lord Bagot sent me that charming work, so beyond all comparison superior to all the other translations. I have not read aloud less than fifty times this violent story, adorned by the pencil of kindred genius. I took it with me to Buxton; and, mentioning it to Mrs. Powys of Berwick, she engaged me to read it to a party at her house, Lady Scarborough, Colonel Lumley and his sisters, Lady Louisa, and Lady Sophia. Then Lady Lawley desired I would bring it to her rooms, where I was to drink tea next day. There I found Lady Harewood, her intelligent friend Mrs. Wood of York, and engaging Miss Garth of the Carleton household, with Lady and Miss Lawley.

These parties talked much of this poem, and partially represented its reader's powers as Siddonian. Then one party after another petitioned to hear it, till there was scarce a morning in which a knot of eight or ten did not flock to my apartments, to be poetically frightened: Mr. Erskine, Mr. Wilberforce — every thing that was every thing, and every thing that was nothing, flocked to *Leonora*; and here, since my return, the fame of this business having travelled from Buxton hither, the same curiosity has prevailed. Its terrible graces grapple minds and tastes of every complexion. Creatures that love not verses for their beauty, like these verses for their horrors. That universal passion for the horrible, must proceed from the mind adverting to its own situation of comparative security, ease, and happiness, and feeling the sense of comfort strongly resulting from the contrast.

Charming Lady Donegall, and her engaging daughter-in-law, Lady Harriot Chichester, Lord Spencer, and Miss Godfrey, were desirous of hearing me read *Leonora*, and of seeing me exhibit the equestrian ghost, though, from their intimacy with

Mr. Spencer, they were familiar with it, as mentioned by him. That party, and also the Swinfen family, met me and the ghost at Freeford. Nothing can exceed the blended dignity and sweetness of the Marchioness. It rejoiced me also to see a son of the first Lady Donegall, whom I have loved and respected, so amiable, pleasing, and elegant. It is to be regretted that he was not the first-born of that house: he would do credit to rank and fortune so princely.

The Orpheus of the English orchestra, Cramer, descended amongst us last week. On a visit to Lord Curzon, he loitered a few days in our little city, allured by the society of his friend Saville. Four of those evenings were devoted to music at Mr. Parker's, Mr. S. Simpson's, and twice at my house. We sat down twenty to supper, each night, and the parties were at once harmonic and convivial. Nothing could exceed Mr. Cramer's amiable desire to please and oblige. He not only played overtures, solos, and quartettos, in the divinest manner, in concert, before supper; but after supper, convulsed us all with laughing at the humorous ingenuity of his violin. He contrived to represent upon it a convent of old nuns, singing hymns at midnight, with their cracked voices, and shivering with cold. Then he set the young folks to dancing, and played country dances to them an whole hour! Thus did he give them to boast through life of having danced to Cramer's violin. That humane soul went to Birmingham, through the bitter severity of last Monday's weather, to play gratis, as Mr. Saville sung gratis, for a brother-musician's concert, who has a large family. I went thither also, by invitation, with Mrs. Ironmonger to Mr. E. Simpson's; but repented the temerity of such an excursion, taken beneath the mal-influence of a violent cold. I was extremely ill all the while I was at Birmingham, and obliged to leave the divine concert before it was half over:

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

... 'For to the fever'd frame,
The warbling strains of softest melody
Seem but discordant harshness.'

I could hardly attend to Cramer's solo, or Saville's enchanting song. I have written till my fingers are tired, and the drowsy hour steals fast upon my pen. Long may it lead you, and your darling brother, to pillows of health and peace!

MRS. JACKSON,

Lichfield, April 17, 1797.

It is at length given me to thank you for one of the most beautiful letters that ever flowed from the pen of genius, entended by affection, and dictating truth. Sweetly does it moralize on our ever-pleasing, ever-benevolent, yet altered Mr. — whose native warmth of heart seems, by a strange dereliction of feeling, absorbed in an inferior order of being. That a dog is a noble, grateful, faithful animal, we must all be conscious, and deserves a portion of our tenderness and care; — yet, from its utter incapacity of more than glimpses of rationality, there is a degree of insanity, as well as of impoliteness to his acquaintance, and of unkindness to his friends, in lavishing so much more of his attention in the first instance, and of affection in the latter, upon it than upon them. Justly do you observe, that this is the more to be regretted, because the heart fancies its sensibilities just the while, though, in fact, they are all perverted; — nor is your remark less true, 'that we never lose much on the side of manners, till we have lost something on the side of feeling; that the politeness of the heart will act impulsively, while the prime emotions of that heart continue to operate in their purity.'

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

Ah! yes, it is too true that imagination is often substituted for feeling. Never was their difference more finely illustrated than by your simile for that substitution, — ‘the double-blossom-cherry, wasting itself in promise.’ Mr. —’s cold silence to me is not yet broken. Five minutes a-day, one month out of three, subtracted from the time every day passed in caressing his dog, would have preserved our correspondence, and spared my heart the conviction, that all his former protestations of eternal interest in me and mine, have melted from his remembrance, beneath the strong sunshine of his late prosperity.

RIGHT HON. LADY ELEANOR BUTLER,

Lichfield, May 22, 1797.

It gratifies me that your Ladyship shares my passion for surveying the living terrors of the desert. I wonder the sight of savage animals should not be as generally, and as much the delight of cultivated as of uncultivated minds. Last November, I hazarded breaking my limbs in ascending a booth in which they were exhibited. Mr. Saville, who always hastens to such spectacles, tempted me by his description of the laughing Hyæna. Its expression of rage is a horrid laugh, exactly that of human insanity, only much louder than any human lungs are competent to produce. Never did I hear a sound so violent and appalling.

While I gaze upon these formidable creatures, my imagination always presents the danger of wandering in the scenes they haunt:

‘What if the lion in his rage I meet;
Oft in the dust I view his printed feet!’

My consciousness of safety luxuriates beneath the secure view of these sublimely terrible animals, in the

sound of their howl and of their roar; while devout thankfulness for our climate's blessed exemptions, exalts and sanctifies the gratulation of egotism.

You will have the goodness, dearest Madam, to mention me affectionately to Miss Ponsonby, and to believe that my attachment to both is fervent, equal, and unalterable. I remain, &c.

MRS. POWYS of Berwick,

Lichfield, June 13, 1797.

I am sure you have sympathised, sincerely as myself, with the alarms of the dear ladies of Langollen Vale, for their native Ireland, and for the many friends and connections yet dear to them in that kingdom. My consciousness that the serenity of their delightful plan of life has been disturbed and wounded by these alarms, and by the impending dangers of England, increases my fruitless desire of conversing with them orally before this tardy and sullen summer, and the probably brighter hours of autumn, shall speed rapidly away.

Ah! how time, as life advances, seems to accelerate his pace. It is true as strange, that we did not feel that he fled so fast, when youth and health inspired his progress. Should not one suppose that pain, imbecility, sorrow, care, and disappointment, would ideally retard it? The probable reason of the reverse-fact, which has, till now, appeared to me an insolvable enigma, this instant occurs to my reflections, thus:—nothing makes time appear so long as expectation, whether pleasurable or painful. Youth is full of expectations; is always pressing forward. To its ardent eyes the future, like the distant parts of the field on which we walk, seems covered with flowers, and we are impatient to attain it. Declining life leans upon the present, and pensively luxuriates on the pleasures, such as they were, of the past. Experience has

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

wintered the aspect of the future, and we rather fear than long for its arrival. Our reflection, how small the portion of existence which remains to us, renders the departure of years, months, even days, a subject of regret, inspired by the natural love of life, — life which, like a snow-ball,

‘The closer grasp’d, the faster melts away.’

Thus time seems to creep when we wish it should fly, and flies when we would retard its progress:

‘Time, to the young, behind him hides his wings,
And seems to creep, decrepit with his age.
Behold him when past by! — What then is seen
But his broad pinions, swifter than the wind?’

MRS. STOKES,

Lichfield, June 15, 1797.

I should have written to you sooner, but you know how short and contracted is my epistolary leisure. Lichfield is so vast a thoroughfare, that I wish my distant friends and acquaintance would be less ready to give notes and letters of recommendation, except in cases of particular attachment, or from the consciousness that the individuals who apply for them, possess the species of talents which would recompense the suspension of perhaps pressing employment, and gratify more than the frivolous curiosity of those who seek introduction. Let it be remembered, that the conversation of a stranger, without literary taste in some degree congenial to our own, must be much less pleasant than that of a neighbour, whose powers of mind may yet be on no higher ground of intellect; since with the latter, the little events of the town and environs, prove sources of mutual communication,

which are often in some degree interesting, where no feast of reason or flow of soul can be expected.

Mrs. Taylor¹ and her eldest daughter are become inhabitants of our city. She had given me no previous intimation of such a design. Mr. and Mrs. Zachary were with me up stairs in my book-room on Tuesday se'ennight, when, at eight o'clock in the evening, my servant came in to say a stranger-lady was below, who wished to see me alone. Going down stairs to attend her, I met Mr. Saville in the gallery, who whispered as he passed me – 'Mrs. Taylor, or I am much mistaken.' This was a mere presentiment, inspired by her appearance – and it prepared me for the possibility. Though in the wane of beauty, a figure finely proportioned, with an air of fashion and elegance; features that had evidently been lovely, and are still pleasing, with a very animated countenance, accosted me thus: 'At this instant the vision of my life is realized.' Such an address seemed to fulfil the Savilian prophecy, and I scrupled not to reply – 'Mrs. Taylor, I am sure.' In a few minutes I persuaded her to join my party up stairs. She interested your brother and sister extremely.

I waited upon her the next day. On my requesting to see herself and Miss Taylor to pass an early day at my house, she said her daughter was ill in bed, but when she was well enough to come out, or to be left, she would accept my invitation. – She did so, and we have since been frequently together. Miss Taylor is about sixteen, not handsome, but very accomplished both in music and painting, with all the reserve and serious modesty of her father, Colonel Taylor's character. As Mrs. Taylor has been her almost sole instructor, her acquirements, and the politeness of her manners, do the highest credit to that Lady's maternal attentions. Her younger sister is at school, and I am

¹ See page 18.

told has an exquisite voice, and sings very finely. This young Lady only plays on the harpsichord and piano-forte – but with such fancy and brilliance, rapidity of touch, and neatness of execution, as few attain at any period of life, out of the profession pale. Mrs. Taylor was educated in Paris, and lived there till she married. The gaiety of French manners still prevails in her appearance and conversation, over all the infelicities of her destiny. Many of her dearest friends, and some of her relations, have been the victim of that infernal guillotine; – while all her own talents and accomplishments are wasted upon a cold and prepossessed ingrate, whose very virtues, by exciting her esteem, have embittered her regrets; – and her darling and gallant son is unfortunate, through a taste for expence, which has embarrassed them all. Her health is also impaired, and her mind assaulted by apprehensions of that dire bosom-disease, which I had the misery of dreading during more than two years! – Ah! what evils! But she describes these complicated sorrows without the least corresponding dejection of countenance.

New intimacies with people residing in this place are not desirable to me. If I do not pass much more time than I can conveniently spare with this Lady, who professes such hyperbole of attachment to me, who declares my society to be the magnet which had allured her hither, I know the horror I have of appearing ungrateful will give a continual sense of dejection to my spirits.

You had not seen White's anecdotes of me in the *Monthly Mirror* last winter, when you adjured me to write my life. I do not wish to say more of myself than is there said, and I am sure I do not know how to say it better. My long habit of transcribing into a book every letter of my own which appears to me worth the attention of the public, omitting the passages

which are totally without interest for any one but those to whom they are addressed, has already filled several volumes. After my death, at least, if not in my lifetime, it is my design that they shall be published. They will faithfully reflect the unimportant events of my life, rendered in some degree interesting, from being animated by the present-time sentiments and feelings of my heart – at least more interesting than a narrative of past occurrences could possibly prove. To sit formally down to such a task of egotism, would extremely revolt my sensations – and, were I inclined to undertake it, I have absolutely no time.

Mr. Saville, without receding an atom from his ministerial idolatry, is grown quite attached to the amiable French officers, now captives in our city. Their conversation is not calculated to enamour us of democratic government. I think it is plainly to be perceived they wish it had never taken place. They do not absolutely say so, but when liberty, as it is called, is the theme, they sigh and shake their heads, as conscious that yet it has produced no solid good comforts in France.

MRS. CHILDERS,

Hoyle Lake, Aug. 16, 1797.

The recurrence of new disease induced me to court the smiles of Hygeia on these amber sands and verdant downs. A poem in my late publication bears the name of this scene, Hoyle Lake, and the landscape of its singular and smiling graces is faithful. I wish you, at this juncture, to honour it with an attentive perusal, if the little miscellany, which contains it, is on your book-shelves. It will enable your lively imagination to receive the scene, as from the pencil; and your regard for the author, will make you pleased ideally to wander with her over the turfy, the level, and

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

verdant plain, stretching wide round the hotel, and
along the firm and sparkling sands,

'Where, tossing the green sea-weed o'er and o'er,
Creeps the hush'd billow on the shelly shore.'¹

The apartments of this recently built hotel are airy, light, and pleasant, with spacious sash-windows, through which the eye always rests on verdure. A spirit of comfort and cleanliness presides here, rarely found in crowded hotels.

I arrived on the third of this month. We have several genteel and well-bred people, - a considerable portion of female youth and beauty, - young men of fortune and fashion to sing and dance with them; - yet is there little for the mind - little for which I could desire to change my lonely musings, as, leaning on my maid's arm, I rove, several times in every day, the soft green downs, whose lawny evenness is so favourable to feeble steps, and inhale the purest air imaginable, 'that blows from off yon beaked promontory,'² over the ever-restless, ever-renovated waters; or, descending to their edge, listen to their murmurings, and ponder their terrific powers, now hushed in calm and sunny suspension, while I recal the images of days and of forms that are fled.

Ah! it must be mind more raised above the common level, than we can hope to meet with often, that could tempt me to resign these pensive luxuries. At meals, and in the dusk evening hours, to join the company in circles of common-place conversation, or at the card-table, affords all the society that mere cheerfulness and good-breeding can induce me to wish for, with Beings so little known.

On the 6th arrived the fair frail Margravina of

¹ From the author's poem 'Louisa'.

² Opps-Head.

Anspach, attended only by domestics. The pride of virtue seemed prodigiously to alarm our ladies about the manner in which it would be proper to treat her; or whether they were to receive or decline her civilities, should they be offered; but the consultations proved needless, — she has lived wholly in private. I have seen her only once — it was on the stairs. On my stopping to give her way, a radiant smile of conciliation beamed from her eye and lip. I sighed to think that the heart, whose effluence that engaging smile seemed to be, could ever have been libertine.

My letter was begun some days ago. Indispensable demands upon my pen prevented its being finished till to-day, nearly as it had approached its limits. Meantime our hotel has become much more crowded, without becoming more pleasant. Aristocratic pride produces much impoliteness; and with the devotees of an ambition so unsocial, and so grovelling, my spirit can have no sympathy; — but walks of interesting contemplation, a forte-piano which I have hired and placed in my apartment, my books, and my pen, avert ennui from my retirements, and prevent me from perceiving myself in the number of those who hail the lapse of time, and rejoice in the death of the day. Adieu!

COLONEL DOWDESWELL, of Shrewsbury,

Lichfield, Nov. 30, 1797.

During the last ten months, eighty French prisoners have resided in Lichfield, with the wisest quietness — with the most uncomplaining patience. On their first arrival, and indeed long afterwards, they could not pass our streets without being brutally reviled by our populace; but they reviled not again. Though several of the officers were men of graceful manners and enlightened minds, yet by no family of this city,

mine and the Simpsons excepted, were they in the smallest degree noticed. So little impression did compassion for their fate, or the involuntary testimony that could not be withheld to their unoffending manners, make upon the indurated hearts of our affluent gentry. The Simpson family and myself strove to cheer, by kindness and a little hospitable attention, the bitter hours of their exile.

On Monday a sad edict arrived from our government, which sent them away the next morning on foot, and under a convoy of cavalry, beneath these severely wintry skies, to pass the freezing nights of their cruel journey on coverless straw; and, on its close, to find themselves in an unwholesome jail at Liverpool, destitute of all the comforts of existence. This dire lot is undoubtedly that of many of our own officers, nursed in the lap of ease and luxury.

O! this horrid, this remorseless war!

MRS. GELL,

Lichfield, Dec. 3, 1797.

I have lately suffered, during a week, all I underwent in the summer, from a severe return of my hemorrhage. My appearance became again a rival spectacle of horror to 'the blood-boltered Banquo,' whose visibility the silly foppery of modern refinement has banished from the stage, to the great injury of the noblest tragedy in the world. Absurd! — that our feelings, which tolerate scenic witches, should be revolted by the sight of a scenic ghost.

Do you not pity me? — think of awakening from imperfect slumber, with streams of blood running down my throat, and threatening suffocation, till on my starting up, they found a less fatal channel, and deluged my pillow! You will conceive that such visitations, by the glimpses of the moon, made the night hideous; but while I have bled, dear Mrs. Hayley

has died! I understood that she had obtained the pleasure of your acquaintance. We met at Derby last spring. She then appeared in the strongest possible health. Never was there a firmer constitution. I have not known her to complain of bodily indisposition. She had a Gallic gaiety of spirit, which the infelicities of her destiny could but transiently, however violently, impede. The short paroxysm of anguish passed, the tide of vivacity returned, and bore down every thing before it.

Nature, after striking off this one singularly characteristic impression, broke the mould in which she made Mrs. Hayley.

Fire in her affections, frost in her sensations, she shrunk from the caresses even of the husband she adored. Hence, while she had a morbid degree of tenaciousness respecting his esteem and attention, she was incapable of personal jealousy; and would amuse herself with the idea of those circumstances, with which she could so perfectly well dispense, being engrossed by another.

Alike during the years of their union, and in those of their separation, she gloried in the talents of her bard, as she used to call Mr. H., and delighted to praise his virtues, perpetually producing specimens of the first, and giving instances of the latter.

While her heart was warmly attached to the many whom she believed her friends – for to wish and to believe were twin feelings with Mrs. H. – while she could not bear, without visible pain and ardent vindication, the slightest word which had a tendency to question their pretensions to talent and virtue; yet, respecting strangers, or acquaintance that did not interest her, she had a quick sense of the ridiculous, which produced very pointed satire; – but, never tired of placing an absurd speech, or mean action, in new lights of ludicrous exhibition, the fertility of her

imagination counteracted the fine edge of her wit, worked her theme thread-bare, and fatigued her auditors.

With sportive fancy; with no inconsiderable portion of belles-lettres knowledge; with polite address, and an harmonious voice in speaking, and with the grace of correct and eloquent language; with rectitude of principles, unsuspecting frankness of heart, and extreme good humour; she was, strange to say! not agreeable, at least not permanently agreeable. The unremitting attention her manner of conversing seemed to claim; her singular laugh, frequent and excessive, past all proportion to its cause, overwhelmed, wearied, and oppressed even those who were most attached to her; who felt her worth, and pitied her banishment from the man on whom she doated — in whose fame she triumphed, tenacious of its claims, even to the most irritable soreness. Yet her rage for society, and excessive love of talking, were so ill calculated to the inclinations and habits of a studious recluse, as to render their living together inconsistent with the peace of either. However, while their separation was the quiet haven of his spirit, it was, unfortunately, a source of pain and mortification to her, though they, by no means, in their degree, amounted to the portion of discontent, which resulted from partaking his solitude. But Mrs. H. had not, any more than our prime minister, that true wisdom which balances evils, and chooses the least.

Her unhappiness in the disunion, came on by sudden violences of sensation, like the grief of the Otaheiteans, who, when the thought of a lost friend occurs, start into agony, shriek, and wound themselves, and then, as instantly recovering, laugh, sing, and dance.

I am extremely curious to know how and why she died; as the event, simply announced in the newspapers, is all I know. If her intentionally blameless

spirit slid out of existence by any of those countless doors which diseases and accidents open, her death will relieve Mr. H.'s mind from much anxiety, occasioned by her total want of common-life discretion, and of economy; – yet had she no personal extravagancies, though a separate maintenance, with her thoughtless disregard of pecuniary calculation, proved inconvenient to the but competent limits of her husband's income, and to the expence of keeping up his beautiful place, and its pleasure-grounds, to which he is enthusiastically attached. About a month ago, I heard, from a person to whom he had mentioned his intention, that he had determined to leave Eartham, through motives of prudence. Soon after I read her decease in the newspapers. I hope there was no self-violence;¹ but her strong health, the extreme, though transient bitterness with which she felt every new mortification, would prevent my being surprised, if information that her expences were likely to banish Mr. H. from his beloved home, had produced a rashness. Alas! should it be so, Mr. H.'s quiet will have received a cureless wound. If not, he will be the happier for this removal.

A flooded valley, beneath the cloudy lour of a wintry moon, is one of those terrible graces in scenery, which the survey of danger, and the consciousness of protection, always form to people of strong imagination. I gaze with pleasing awe on the swoln, the extravagant, and usurping waters, as they roll over the fields, and, white with turbid foam, beat against the bushes.

This solemn luxury I can seldom taste, not having corporal power to seek abroad such scenes in the inclement nights which produce them; for of even the

¹ The author, soon after the date of this letter, had the satisfaction of learning that Mrs. H. died of an epidemic fever, and that her fears of self-violence in the case had no foundation. – A.S.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

vernal and summer flood, miry ways are concomitant, and to feeble steps they are formidable; – but I have been in situations like yours, when my mind could thus luxuriate in the prospect of scenic desolation, unpurchased by fatigue, difficulty, or danger.

Here is a long letter; I hope it will not substitute the real sin of wearying, for the imaginary one of neglecting you. Farewell.

THOS. PARK, ESQ.,

Lichfield, Dec. 21, 1797.

VERY kind is your wish of consulting one of your London physicians on my case; but I have more confidence in those who have been long used to my constitution, and of whose skill I think highly:

‘My May of life

Is fallen into the scar, the yellow leaf.’

And many are the disorders which annoy its wane. The rheumatism which, in a less degree, has long lurked in my frame, and weakened my limbs, lately settled, with accumulated force, in the sciatic nerve of my right hip. During three or four days, I could not set my foot to the ground, without insuppressive screams, and the assistance of two people. I have used, several times a-day, as an embrocation, the pretended essence of mustard, to the efficacy of which there is such lavish testimony in the newspapers. I say *pretended*, because my surgeon and we are all convinced, that it does not contain a single grain of mustard, and is merely oil of turpentine tinged with saffron or something of that colour. Yet I think it has been of use to me, and, therefore, what it is matters little.

REV. H. F. CARY,

Lichfield, March 4, 1798.

I return your Coleridge, and have purchased one

myself. It would disgrace a poetic reader not to have him on their shelves. His ideas are bold, beautiful, and original. He is no cold copyist – Nature is the exhaustless volume he unclasps. In his style, perhaps, simplicity some times degenerates into a too studied homeliness of phrase; and he does not, in his blank verse, float the pause so gracefully as he might. From the latitude I have heard attributed to his morals, it surprised me to find his writings so deeply tinged with religious enthusiasm. Either he is a methodist, or an hypocrite. I hope it is the former.

Coleridge's Ode on the departing Year, which, reading in the newspapers, I had disliked as turgid and obscure, is so much changed in this volume, as to impress me with a conviction of its being one of the grandest odes in our language. Such odes are the proudest, noblest boast of poetry, after the epics of Homer and Milton, and the dramas of Shakespeare. But, to return to the Ode on the departing Year. In this edition, its ideas are become luminous, as they were bold, and it has received very fine additions. So will it ever be, when true genius devotes its powers to correcting at leisure its hasty and crude essays.

REV. F. JAUNCEY,

Lichfield, March 13, 1798.

You clergymen, who ought to have exhorted pacific measures, have been deeply to blame in your contrary conduct; and if the dreadful and remorseless French, whose vengeance we have provoked, should revolutionize this unhappy country, the clergy will be the first to feel the dire effects of their own adjurations. This, once for all, is my political creed. I shall not be able to change your opinion, nor can you alter mine. Fruitless, therefore, is it to make the miserable situation of these kingdoms a farther theme in our letters.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

A few of those I best love think with you. I do not love them the less, though I wonder more and more at their infatuation.

You will expect a little Lichfield news. Louisa G., the elegant, the witty, the eccentric, the agreeable, is going to marry her clerical kinsman and namesake; of silence so inflexible and solemn. These contraries in choice are not uncommon – perhaps they are not unwise. Edgeworth used to say of two brilliant spirits of different sexes, ‘If that man and woman were to marry, they would skim the moon.’ One domestic sphere would probably be too narrow to contain comfortably a couple of moon-skimmers. Adio!

THE RIGHT HON. LADY ELEANOR BUTLER, AND MISS
PONSONBY,

Lichfield, April 24, 1798.

This day a summer’s sun warmly gilds the fields, the gardens, and the groves, now diffusing fragrance, and bursting into bloom. Fresh and undulating breezes from the east lured me into my drawing-room, having placed in its lifted sash the Æolian harp. It is, at this instant, warbling through all the varieties of the harmonic chords. This apartment looks upon a small lawn, gently sloping upwards. Till this spring, it was shrubbery to the edge of the grassy terrace on its summit; but I have lately covered it with a fine turf, sprinkled with cypresses, junipers, and laurels. It is bordered on the right hand by tall laburnums, lilachs, and trees of the Gelder rose,

... ‘throwing up, mid trees of darker leaf,
Its silver globes, light as the foamy surf,
Which the wind severs from the broken wave.’

Beyond this little lawny elevation, the wall which

divides its terrace from the sweet valley it overlooks, is not visible. These windows command the loveliest part of that valley, and only its first field is concealed by the sloping swell of the foreground. The vale is scarcely half a mile across, bounded, basin-like, by a semicircle of gentle hills, luxuriantly foliaged. There is a lake in its bosom, and a venerable old church, with its grey and moss-grown tower on the water's edge. Left of that old church, on the rising ground beyond, stands an elegant villa, half shrouded in its groves; – and, to the right below, on the bank of the lake, another villa with its gardens. The as yet azure waters are but little intercepted by the immense and very ancient willow that stands opposite these windows in the middle of the vale; that willow, whose height and dimensions are the wonder of naturalists. The centre of the lake gleams through its wide-spread branches, and it appears on each side like a considerable river, from its boundaries being concealed. On the right, one of our streets runs from the town to the water, interspersed with trees and gardens. It looks like an umbraged village, and is all we see from hence of the city, so that nothing can be more quiet and rural than the landscape. It is less beautiful in summer than in spring, from the weeds that sprout up in the lake, and from the set which partially creeps upon its surface.

In my youth, it was always clear – but it is said that, some fifteen years back, two of our gormandizing aldermen took a boat and sowed it with water-lilies, to preserve the fish. The mischief is irreparable, since the cleansing it receives every autumn only procures transparence till the sun of middle summer enables the deep-rooted weeds to defy the scythe and the shovel.

What lovely weather! – Our valley is bursting into

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

bloom, and the fruit trees of a large public garden in one part of it, now in full blossom, presents a grove of silver, amidst the lively and tender green of the fields and hedge-rows. Alas! the melancholy of the apprehensive heart is rather increased than abated by this vernal luxury. It seems but as gay garlands on the neck of a victim. — In every frame of mind, I remain, dearest ladies, &c.

RIGHT HON. LADY EIFANOR BUTLER,

Lichfield, June 4, 1798.

SINCE I had the honour and happiness to hear from your Ladyship and Miss Ponsonby, I fear your mutual peace has again been cruelly annoyed by the struggles of rebellion in your native country, rallying her dark forces. Happily, however, they meet nothing but defeat. The opinion seems very general, that ere long they will be finally subdued. May it prove so! — for if Ireland should fall into the power of France, a similar fate for this country cannot be distant. May the attempt to overthrow constitutional government in Ireland be such as to blast the hopes, and wither the exertions of those in our own nation, who suffer their just indignation against the cabinet-council of London to pass the bounds of reason and humanity, who are endeavouring to establish the tyranny of democratic sway in these dominions, though they perceive the lawless oppression it has produced in France, where extent of Empire presents no compensation for the slavery under which her people groan.

I hope to Heaven, that the force from England, necessary to quell Irish insurrection, will not exhaust our means of adequate protection, should the desperate French effect their invading purpose. If they can escape our fleets, they doubtless mean to make a descent on both countries at the same, or nearly the same period. Obtaining footing in Ireland, the mis-

chief to us of the disaffection there would indeed be terrible. I have always foreseen the consequence of provoking the majority of that nation, by the recal of Lord Fitzwilliam, and by the rejection of his conciliatory plan. That was the period, never perhaps again to recur, in which, granting to the Catholics equal privileges with the Protestants, would have softened the jealous and embittered spirit of a long-oppressed, a brave, but, when roused into resistance, a fierce, a rash, a cruel people; – would have united them, heart and hand with England, against the common foe, the tyrant of Europe.

Our private friends are ever first and oftenest in our thoughts, beneath the lour of national calamity. I peruse and hear every syllable of Irish news with Lady Eleanor and Miss Ponsonby's image before my eyes, and every hope and fear on the subject passes through the medium of my sympathy with their feelings; especially since I learnt that their fortunes, as well as anxieties, from connections, are at stake in the conflict. My solicitude then became poignant indeed, in despite of every human probability, that, however the storm of rebellion may yet again gather and regather, ere its final dispersion, yet, if the French can be kept from those coasts, it will never be able to sink your hopes and your independence in the 'dire vortex of French dominion'.

What a mischievous madman has Lord E. Fitzgerald proved! You have deplored the fate of his gentle, his accomplished Adelaide – hard, indeed, if she loves the rash one, who hath trod the dark paths of her father's destruction. He will meet from this government, which he has deserted, an equal and an earlier fate. It will anticipate the destiny which he would doubtless have met from the French, had they, by his means, and those of his kindred spirits, drawn Ireland within the grasp of their power.

'Thus deadly Atropus, with fatal shears,
Slits the thin promise of th' expected years,
While, 'mid the dungeon's gloom, and battle's din,
Ambition's victims perish as they spin.'

I am excessively gratified, that you think dear Honora lovely; that you honour her with a situation so distinguished. Every line in that engraving¹ bears her stamp and image, except those which, in a luckless moment, combined to attach the foot of a plough-boy to a form in every other point so beautiful. All the obligation of her establishment in the Lyceum of Langollen Vale is on my side. How could dear Miss Ponsonby speak of it as on yours and her own! I would cheerfully have given treble the cost of this engraving, for the consciousness that the similitude of the fair idol of my affections is thus enshrined.

Honora Sneyd, after she became Mrs. Edgeworth, sat to Smart, at that time a celebrated miniature-painter. He totally missed the likeness, which Major André had, from his then inexperience in the art, so faintly, and with so little justice to her beauty, caught. Romney accidentally, and without having ever beheld her, produced it completely. Yes, he drew, to represent the Serena of the Triumphs of Temper, his own abstract idea of perfect loveliness, and the form and the face of Honora Sneyd rose beneath his pencil.

Few circumstances have proved so fortunate for the indulgence of my heart as this accidental resemblance. A fortnight since, according to my annual custom, I removed it from my sitting-room below stairs, of western aspect, to my little embowered book-room, into whose northern window the sun never looks in his ardour, though it catches partially, in summer, the golden glances of his evening beams. Thus is this

¹ Romney's picture of Serena reading by candle-light. - A.S.

beauteous resemblance my constant companion, and contributes to endear, as the bright reality endeared, in times long past, this pleasant mansion to my affections; – and thus, whenever I lift my eyes from my pen, my book, or the faces of my companions, they anchor on that countenance, which was the sun of my youthful horizon. Another striking likeness of my lost Honora, in a paper shade, taken when she was seventeen, stands opposite my bed, and has stood there from the time she left this house, in her nineteenth year. Thus are those dear lineaments ever present to my sight, when I am beneath this roof, alike in the hours of energy and of repose, retouching the traits of memory, over which indistinctness is apt to steal, in consequence of perpetual and too intense recurrence. But for such aptness, pictures of those we love would be of little value.

Those oppressive rheumatic pains in my loins, my back, and knees, which are gradually stealing away all the strength of my frame, oblige me to think of trying Buxton again – and the state exactions prevent my income from allowing me to take two journies this year. The cordial assurance you give me of your mutual wishes to see me in your Eden, ere the bright months pass away, stimulates my, alas! fruitless wishes to find myself in that dear adorned retirement. I rejoice that your beloved Miss Bowdler will soon visit it daily. Her society will often steal your thoughts from the lurid clouds that darken your native land. Happy for me if those imperious circumstances, which so often deride our free agency, would permit my joining the interesting party.

It gives me pleasure that you meditate for Mr. Whalley, should he revisit your neighbourhood, a recompence for having coldly repressed the aspiration of his hope to have been received at Langollen. He has talents and virtues that merit this recompence –

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

and it will increase your wish of extending it, to know that his peace is blighted by the base ingratitude and infamous unchastity of the child of his cares, whom nature had endowed and adorned with lavish profusion, both as to beauty and genius, and whose talents his exertions had cultivated to the most dazzling extent. Often does he exclaim with Sciolto,

‘O! when I think what pleasure I took in thee,
What joy thou gav’st me in thy prattling infancy,
Thy sprightly wit and early blooming beauty! –
I thought the day too short to gaze upon thee,
Why didst thou turn to folly, then, and curse me?’

This cruel disappointment has changed him much – has lamentably chilled the glow of his warm and generous mind, respecting the effusions of genius and the attainment of art. He ceases also to delight in corresponding with his distant friends. It is long since I heard from him.

I remain, dearest Madam, your ever affectionate and devoted, &c.

MR. SAVILLE,

Lichfield, June 15, 1798.

It is unlucky, but I hope to Heaven it will not be more than unlucky, for your short residence in London, that here is a June whose cloudless ardours have not been paralleled during very many past years. The summer-solstice is generally ushered in by winds and showers; but, during the three past weeks, the rivers have shrunk in their banks, the channels of the brooks are dry; the lawns are brown and slippery; the earth wrinkles as in frost; birds sit silent in the centres of the hedge-rows; the cows stand with drooping neck in the reedy brooks; the streets are still vacant and dusty, and silence is over the hills at noon.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

MISS PONSONBY,

Buxton, Aug. 9, 1798.

I CONGRATULATE my dear friends upon the sweet and, I trust, lasting repose of their fears for the state of Ireland. Alas! that it should have cost such a bleeding price: yet that the greatly worse is averted, must inspire a sense of delight from subsided terror, which the intermingled bitterness of victim-regret cannot do away.

The increasing power of my rheumatic malady, forced me to seek these springs rather than the billows of High Lake, from which I should have been thrice happy in circling home by Langollen. Thus the halcyon days, which last summer were mine, may not gild and inspirit this. If I live, and the fiend of the joints remits his persecution, I hope, next year, to see and converse with friends, to whose society my whole mind is wedded; and to see the image of that fair creature, who shed the light of happiness over many of my youthful years, honoured with so enshrined a situation.

This month is always high season at Buxton. The crowd is immense, though I never remember so few families of rank, and there is a tristful lack of elegant beaux. The male youth and middle life of England are, you know, all soldierized and gone to camps and coasts; and so a few prim parsons, and a few dancing doctors, are the forlorn hope of the belles.

And here is Mrs. Powys of Berwick, in loveliness which none of them can approach, which time seems to have lost his power to tarnish, which no custom of the eye can pall.

No, dear Madam, I was not, as you suppose, favoured with a letter from General Washington, expressly addressed to myself; but, a few years after peace was signed between this country and America,

an officer introduced himself, commissioned from General Washington, to call upon me, and to assure me, from the General himself, that no circumstance of his life had been so mortifying as to be censured in the Monody on André, as the pitiless author of his ignominious fate: that he had laboured to save him – that he requested my attention to papers on the subject, which he had sent by this officer for my perusal.

On examining them, I found they entirely acquitted the General. They filled me with contrition for the rash injustice of my censure. With a copy of the proceedings of the court-martial that determined André's condemnation, there was a copy of a letter from General Washington to General Clinton, offering to give up André in exchange for Arnold, who had fled to the British camp, observing the reason there was to believe that the apostate General had exposed that gallant English officer to unnecessary danger to facilitate his own escape: Copy of another letter from General Washington to Major André, adjuring him to state to the commander in chief his unavoidable conviction of the selfish perfidy of Arnold, in suggesting that plan of disguise, which exposed André, if taken, to certain condemnation as a spy, when, if he had come openly in his regimentals, and under a flag of truce, to the then unsuspected American general, he would have been perfectly safe: Copy of André's high-souled answer, thanking General W. for the interest he took in his destiny; but, observing that, even under conviction of General Arnold's inattention to his safety, he could not suggest to General Clinton any thing which might influence him to save his less important life by such an exchange.

These, Madam, are the circumstances, as faithfully as I can recal them, at such a distance of time, of the interview with General Washington's friend, which I slightly mentioned to yourself and Lady Eleanor,

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

when I had the happiness of being with you last summer.

A pleasant friend of mine from Lichfield, accompanied me hither, a Mrs. Ironmonger. She is lively and pleasing. I have the pleasure to see her please and be pleased, in a scene of great gaiety, compared to our quiet little city, notwithstanding the diminution of splendour and elegance that used to pace through the golden-hued Crescent, whirl over its area, or flit beneath its chandeliers.

We have a very pleasant society at St. Anne's Hotel. Our most intimate acquaintance, an interesting Irish family: Amiable, graceful Lady Newcomine, and her three lovely and very engaging daughters, with whom we walk and go to the rooms. Captain and Mrs. Bingham and her sister, a beautiful and sprightly little woman. Charming Mrs. Childers will soon arrive, and pour her intellectual brightness over this scene.

Literary characters are as scarce here as nobility. I miss the eloquence of Erskine and Wilberforce more than the titles.

Adieu, dearest Madam, and believe me always faithfully yours.

EDMUND WIGLEY, ESQ.,

Lichfield, Oct. 12, 1798.

I CONGRATULATE you upon Admiral Nelson's glorious victory. It is great for England; and yet I fear it will not give us peace, the most desirable fruit of bloody victories.

The three captive generals of the Irish invasion are here. They have called upon me, introduced by a French gentleman, resident in Lichfield before the revolutionary volcano, from its Parisian crater, burst over Europe.

General Humbert is rather an handsome man, and

polite in his address; much more externally polished than the Generals Saraszin and Fontaine; but none of them know any thing of English, and my ignorance of French clogged our converse with the tediousness of interpretation.

The restraints these gentlemen laid upon the depredations and murderous purposes of the savage Irish, entitle them to the civility they met from Lord Cornwallis and his officers; but they will meet with no general attention here. It would be better if the good people of this city would take other methods of reiterating the proofs of their unquestioned loyalty, than by a violation of that precept of the Gospel, of all others the most important to the interests of morality: 'Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you.' Let them imagine their husbands, sons, and brothers prisoners in France, and as they would the French should treat them, so treat the prisoners of that country thrown on our mercy. Such liberality could do no harm; and, if universally prevalent, might do much good, by softening the national rancour between the two states, and inducing a mutual wish to sheath the sword of desolation. I lately heard the brave Mr. Ormsby of Dublin say, who has so gallantly exerted himself against the rebels in his native Ireland, 'I called upon the French generals when I was in Lichfield: the instant a man is a prisoner, I forget that he was a foe.' I honoured him for the nobleness of the sentiment. — Such an oblivious power ought the misfortunes of our enemies to possess over every mind.

MRS. CHILDERS,

Lichfield, Dec. 23, 1798.

Supernatural horrors are the taste of the times. Have you seen the *Aucient Mariner*? It is the greatest *quix* of a composition I ever met with — but it has very *fine* strokes of genius. The style of obsolete simplicity

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

suits the unmeaning wildness of its plan, and of its terrific features. The moral of this oddity is not less defective in rationality than the plan. Enormous punishments are decreed to a trifling crime; and, besides that, two hundred people, innocent of even that trifling crime, are its victims, while the person who committed it escapes death. Of the softer beauties of writing, rare are the instances in the *Ancient Mariner*; yet, in one verse, they shed their mild light. My recollection of that verse is probably not accurate, but it is to this effect:

‘The sails kept on a gentle noise,
Like a little huddling rill,
All in the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods at night,
Singeth a quiet tune.’

The rhymes have nothing like regularity, neither has the measure, as to quantity; and old words are used, which have so long been discarded, that they cannot but by the context, be understood; – such as, ‘they nold,’ for they did not; and ‘the eldrich deck,’ whose meaning none of us can guess.

THOS. PARK, ESQ.,

Lichfield, Jan. 30, 1800.

Certainly the resemblance between Chatterton’s personification of winter and mine are too strong to have been the result of coincidence, and must be unconscious plagiarism, and that on my part. I conclude this elegy was printed in some of the magazines during its author’s lifetime; that it there met my eye, and this its picture of winter impressed my imagination, though I lost, as years rolled on, my recollection of its source. Disposed to write a sonnet on winter, I

conclude some features of Chatterton's impersonization of that season came forward, from the large deposit of English poetry in my brain, and rendered me an unconscious plagiarist.

Long before the fame of this miraculous creature had gone abroad, the verses which appeared with his name in the magazines, and with a brief account of the obscurity of his birth, and his entire deprivation of literary instruction, had inspired my youthful mind with conviction of the magnitude of his genius, so finely, of late years, eulogized by Mr. Coleridge in the following lines:

. . . 'Britannia's boast, the wond'rous boy,
An amaranth, that earth scarce seem'd to own,
Blooming in poverty's bleak wintry shade,
Till disappointment came, and pelting wrong,
Beat it to earth.'

Soon after the volume above mentioned appeared, I spoke of its author to Johnson, with the warmest tribute of my admiration; but he would not hear me on the subject, exclaiming, — 'Pho, child! don't talk to me of the powers of a vulgar uneducated stripling. He may be another Stephen Duck. It may be extraordinary to do such things as he did, with means so slender; — but what did Stephen Duck do, what could Chatterton do, which, abstracted from the recollection of his situation, can be worth the attention of learning and taste? Neither of them had opportunities of enlarging their stock of ideas. No man can coin guineas, but in proportion as he has gold.'

Though Chatterton had been long dead when Johnson began his *Lives of the English Poets*; though this stupendous miscellany had then been some time before the world; though its contents had engaged half the literati of the nation in controversy, yet would not

Johnson allow Chatterton a place in those volumes in which Pomfret and Yalden were admitted. So invincible were his grudging and surly prejudices – enduring long-deceased genius but ill – and contemporary genius not at all.

EDWARD JERNINGHAM, ESQ.,

January 17, 1801.

Nothing is more disgusting to me, and indeed to the generality of people, than dictatorial egotism from the pulpit. Even in the learned and aged clergyman, it is priestly arrogance. In the young declaimer it is insufferable presumption. There is too much of it in Bossuet. If the preacher censures, he ought to censure in his Master's name and authority, not in his own. Let him involve his own frailty in his charge of general depravity, and let him express a desire of self-amendment when he exhorts his brethren to forsake their sins. *We* and *us*, not the priest-proud *I*, ought to be the sign-personal in his language. Let modesty and humility bridle his imagination; sincerity, truth, and paternal kindness, be the sources of his admonition, and then may he take your advice, and neglect no means of awakening the passions of his audience, with the marked calamities or signal blessings, which time past or present, circumstances local or general, may present to his subject.

Some fifteen years ago I wrote six sermons. Most of them have been preached. Without the congregation knowing that they were not his by whom they were delivered, I had the satisfaction of witnessing their attention and their tears.

The *amor patriæ* is fervid in my bosom. The superiority of English talents, in all the walks of genius, I proudly feel. The sons of the song, the pencil, and the lyre, support it more and more every day, and

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

hour, and I burn to assert their claims whenever I see them questioned.

REV. ED. ROBERTS of Dinbren, Wales,
Lichfield, Feb. 16, 1801.

If ever a superintending Providence wrote disapprobation of human conduct in the broad characters of events, it has inscribed presumption, folly, and cruelty on this war, as it inscribed injustice and tyranny on that with America. From the self-incurred mischiefs and dangers of the American war, we were rescued by those who had uniformly opposed it. From the far greater mischiefs and dangers of this, we can only be so rescued now.

All your eyes will be opened at last; but, I fear, not before the nation is irredeemably ruined. Desperation has begun its work in our little city, from my infant years, till within these six weeks, so peaceful and secure. Houses are broke open, and nightly attempted. The deanery has been robbed; and five ruffians entered the chamber of a widow lady, a mile out of town. Her property was saved by the presence of mind of her maid-servant, who, with a watchman's rattle, alarmed the neighbouring houses. My apprehensions have caused my dressing-room door to be barricadoed like a jail, with bars and bolts. Thus do we begin to lose, in more than imaginary terrors, the quiet of our curtained sleep. Adieu!

EDWARD JERNINGHAM, Esq.,
Lichfield, Feb. 23, 1801.

What you tell me about the exclusion of compositions by English masters from the high-life concerts, only proves that the same infatuation prevails in that science amongst our great people, as in poetry amongst our academicians. It is the English mania to prefer

the productions of foreigners to those of our own country. I see you are not acquainted with the beautiful compositions in music, which exist for the honour of England. You have had no opportunity of hearing them, banished as they dully are from the fashionable concerts. So was Shakespeare banished our stage from the gay Gallic reign of Charles the Second, till the talents and resolution of Garrick restored him. So have been, and so still are, the great English poets from our universities, to the infinite detriment of the understanding and taste of our students, since superior to the Greek, Roman, and Tuscan bards, are the bards of Britain, in every line but of the epic, and even there our Milton equals Homer, and transcends Virgil.

When I was a girl, it was the fashion for the fine people to abuse Handel as heavy, coarse, and tiresome. Our king, by instituting the commemorations, rescued his fame. If I was Prince of Wales, I would give concerts, from which every foreign composition should be interdicted; and glees should be performed there, that must awaken the cold dead ear of prejudice itself into life and enthusiasm. But it is time to close my controversy, for the clock has struck that hour which Burns, with equal humour and fancy, calls the key-stone of night's black arch. Addio!

MRS. CHILDERS, of Yorkshire,
Lichfield, April 29, 1801.

AH, my friend, I have a sad account to give you of my situation, and of my hopes of ever being able to accept your kind invitation to Cantley. Too much reason have I to apprehend a total loss of all ability to travel. You know that the strength of my youth was blighted by the accident which broke the patella of my right knee, though I obtained the power of walking on even ground, without perceptible lameness; but I

remained, through life, subject to the constantly impending danger of falling. Irequent have been those falls, producing temporary pain and confinement, but generally a few days restored me to the usual level of my, at best, feeble exertion. On the 27th of last month, deceived by an imperfect moonlight, I fell with violence down steps into the street, after paying an evening visit. Then, alas! it was, that I so violently sprained the muscles and tendons of my, till then, uninjured left knee, as to reduce it to an equal degree of weakness with that which is broken. Unable to stand, I was carried by two men from my sedan to my bed; which my surgeon ordered I should not leave till the swelling and discoloration subsided. He flattered me that, since nothing was absolutely broken, a fortnight or three weeks would repair the mischief. When, at the four days expiration, I was got up, I found I had utterly lost all power of rising from my bed, or chair, even though a very high one, without the assistance of two people; and also of ascending or descending stairs. Hitherto time, in whose name lavish promises were made me by the faculty, has done nothing towards the restoration of that power, though I can walk, with a servant's arm, through the range of those fortunately large and airy rooms, which are level with my bed-chamber and dressing-room. Thus I contrive, by a quarter of an hour at a time, to walk my allotted two miles every day, though I have not attempted to go down stairs. These fresh vernal breezes from the cathedral area, in the south and west front of my house, and from the valley to the east, and from the gentle hills to the north, refresh me as I walk. I have pain, but, thank God, it is not violent. Some attached friends, and many social neighbours, cheer my confinement.

Hopeless and helpless imprisonment is a melancholy thing, however mitigated. To me it must pre-

clude many circumstances material to my health, and precious to my wishes. I have chronic maladies, which often require Buxton waters and coast residence. If this last injury should, as I have a deep conviction that it will, prove irreparable, I shall not dare to travel; and in the loss of local freedom, vanish my hopes of seeing you at Cantley, or of meeting you where we have twice met, living, during happy weeks, in daily intercourse, confidential, affectionate, and literary: – and then there is dear Mrs. Roberts, and her charming neighbours, Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby, at whose Arcadian court it was so much my delight to pay my vows of amity! Those I must never more behold, if my present deprived state of limbs continues; for Mrs. Roberts, totally crippled, cannot travel, and the Ladies of the Cambrian valley will not.

Within these last twelve years, my constitution has struggled with various maladies, but under them I always hoped relief, and often, through the goodness of God, obtained it. Now a deep internal conviction of life-long imbecility sickens at my heart, and withers the energy of my mind, – while the gloom of apprehension, more than selfish, often darkens my spirit. The oldest, the most esteemed, the most valued of my friends, finds his long-precarious health more frequently assailed by nervous malady, beneath which his strength and cheerfulness decline. I will not apologize for this exuberance of wailful egotism, but rest it securely on your sympathy.

Adieu! Say kind things in your domestic circle for the poor prisoner, who now commits to your indulgent patience her sighs for the loss of local liberty. Let me have your prayers for the restoration of my injured limb, and for the resignation of my spirit under all the chastisements of Heaven.

To the DEAN and CHAPTER,

Lichfield, Oct. 3, 1801.

GENTLEMEN, — I have heard, with deep concern, of your design to impoverish still farther the useful and lovely shades of the Dean's Walk, already much injured by the unsightly bareness at the top of the walk; by the disproportioned width of the trees before the deanery and Mr. Danniel's house; and by their awkward lopping before Dr. Falconer's. The now-purposed devastation is of tenfold magnitude. I am conscious that all power to carry it into effect exists in the Dean and Chapter; but I write humbly to deprecate its exertion, the mischief of which must be irreparable to the beauty of the Close, as the demolition of the conduit, by a similar decree, has proved to the convenience of its inhabitants, and to its safety in case of fire.

Consider, Gentlemen, that this now gracefully shaded area is the admiration of travellers, the pride and delight of those who live within its boundaries! — that it is a fixed principle in landscape-taste, that wherever there is continuous shade, if it is not full and luxuriant, it ceases to be beautiful; that the effect of taking away every other tree, will be like drawing every other tooth in the front of a well-furnished mouth; that the disposition of trees to approximate, will, after such sad thinning, produce, in length of time, an effort of the boughs to shoot horizontally which must form a straight line, or something near a straight line, at top. That free, irregular, and graceful outline, which, since they have been allowed to grow naturally, they form where they have not been thinned, will be broken and lost. If only the few short and weaker trees were to be felled, the mischief might not be of a magnitude so deplorable, — but it is grievous to see the seal of destruction on a number of the very noblest amongst those which have hitherto been spared.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

Milton's description of the Garden of Eden, is allowed to have formed that taste in landscape, which has rendered the English pleasure-grounds so celebrated. He there mentions impervious shade amongst the beauties of Paradise, — thus:

‘And where the morning sun first warmly smote
The open field, and where the unpierc’d shade
Embrown’d the noon-tide bowers.’

I entreat, Gentlemen, that you will, at least, redeem the marked victims, which now stand in the pride of their strength and grace, before the gates of the house in which I dwell. A handsome house is a much more picturesque object, at a little distance, from being in part shaded; and the walk once entered, the palace appears with much better effect for having been, for an instant, partially veiled. Ah! why deprive her who now inhabits it, and those by whom it may hereafter be occupied, of the pleasant shade which those devoted trees now cast over the court? Pray, pray spare them! I should be happy if my pleadings might avail for the preservation of all the fine trees now bearing the fatal warrant; that it might, ere yet too late, be considered how dangerous it is to alter what cannot be restored, and what is already at once useful and lovely. Every person with whom I have conversed upon the subject has lamented this plan.

I have the honour to remain, Gentlemen, your faithful and obedient servant.

CAPT. ROBERT WOLSELEY,

Lichfield, Dec. 14, 1801.

I HAVE the satisfaction to tell you that Mr. Saville is, we trust, recovering from his late perilous seizure. At his time of life, relapses are much to be dreaded; but it is on all occasions wisdom to hope the best, and

not to antedate in imagination the hour of anguish. He is obliged by your kind inquiries.

Your verses to Aspasia, are an ingenious and gallant hyperbole in musical numbers. You say the ideas are not entirely original. Keep your own counsel on that head to the lady. Perhaps she is not likely to trace you to your sources; nor am I likely to penetrate the mysterious veil you have thrown upon her identity. Prying curiosity, the reputed fault of the class of beings to which I belong, is not individually mine. Yet has it frequently been and, in one instance, comically enough, my fate to receive the unsolicited confidence of lovers. At different periods, four ladies, and three of them very slightly known to me, have poured upon my ear avowals of passion for my friend Captain S. Arden. They erroneously believed me entrusted with the state of his affections, and wanted to calculate upon intelligence, obtained from me, the chances of success which their attentions to him possessed,

‘Silence that speaks, and eloquence of eyes.’

Two of the four were widows; the first young and gay, shewy and well jointured; the second a little autumnal, soft of voice, and languid of eye; the other two were blooming spinsters.

They all declared to me that the loss of Captain A.’s right arm first created that tender interest, which, beneath only common politeness on his part, had ripened into love, impassioned and exclusive. So, if you young men wish to make conquests, you see how easily it may be done; a smart stroke with a cleaver, between your right elbow and shoulder, and the spell of irresistibility is complete.

I thank you, and I thank your domestic friends, for

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

my assured welcome at Wolseley Hall, if I should ever have the happiness of paying my respects there; but alas! the deep maim of last March, makes me a reluctant traveller, and a troublesome guest. Adieu!

MRS. CHILDERS,

Lichfield, Dec. 27, 1801.

You congratulate me upon the peace; and indeed it is well that the mad career of Bellona, miserable for Europe, and ruinous to England, is at last arrested; but the blessing is come much too late to repair the mischiefs of the curse. Though the wide waste of life, and the tears of the surviving mourners may pass away from remembrance, other, and more dangerous miseries, the certain consequence of the needless warfare, will remain, and substitute, for phantom-danger, real peril to the government of this country. The dreadful load of debt it has left, renders it impossible to remove the burden of the taxes, which every class shifts from its own shoulders to those of the class beneath them; the noblemen, and large estated gentlemen, by raised rents to their tenants; the tenants by monopoly, and the extravagant price they exact for the necessaries of life; and the mercantile world, by evasion protected, by the impossibility of the commissioners calculating the income resulting from their traffic, shift the burden to the lowest order of the people, who pine and perish in want, and incur disease, which spreads contagion over the land.

The populace are now looking to peace, and the fruits of the late plenteous harvest, for the return of their comforts. They will find, alas! a bitter disappointment; and when they have lost all hope of redress to their grievances, it is dreadfully probable that they will rush on change, stimulated by the agricultural plenty, the rising commerce, and the increased power of France; and though their efforts will

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

but redouble their wretchedness, they will probably end in long anarchy, and blasted empire.

MRS. M. POWYS,

Lichfield, Feb. 5, 1802.

My heart has often responded to the interesting contents of the letter before me, and vexatious to me proved the perpetual occurrence of restraining circumstances, that wasted, in fruitless purpose, the duty of an earlier acknowledgment.

Some part of the intervening time I had neither wish nor power to write, even to the dearest of my absent friends. That you are that dearest I can, without flattery, avow. Your kind bosom is a mirror which reflects my happiest years, and on your memory their sweetest delights are written. Friends of later date may be admired, esteemed, beloved, but, unconscious of Honora, cannot be dear to me as yourself.

I have excited your attention, the friendly wish to learn what was that circumstance which wrapt my spirits in so drear a stagnation; but you guess it, and you guess truly, that it was fears for his life, who, as well as yourself, is blessedly spared to me from the wrecks of time, of change, of mortality; and who is not, as you, alas! are, divided from me widely, but with whom I can every day talk of past days, and of all whose for ever lost society contributed to make them happy; and who now, though slumbering in the dark and narrow house, render pleasant the tales of other times, by the power of those indelible images of their persons, their talents, and their kindness, which they have left in our hearts.

You know that Mr. Saville's health has been long precarious. On the first of December I received an alarming summons to his house at day-dawn. In the severe cold of the preceding day he had, against earnest remonstrance, been twice at church. where he

read the first lessons, and joined in the services and anthems. At six in the morning he found himself suddenly, and as he believed, fatally seized. He seemed to have lost the use of his limbs; could not bear the light, nor lift up his eyelids. I found him in his daughter's arms, perfectly sensible, but shivering and trembling violently, and avowing his belief that his dissolution was near. Mrs. Smith had sent for our skilful and humane physician, Dr. Jones. He did not arrive till nine, and before his arrival our poor friend grew better; his tremblings abated, and he could open his eyes. The Doctor comforted us that the present danger was subsiding.

At that juncture Mr. Saville was preparing to quit the little habitation which had sheltered him twenty-eight years. The old woman who slept in his house and waited upon him, was become nearly superannuated, and incapable of giving proper attendance in severe sickness. There was no third apartment in which his daughter, Mrs. Smith, could sleep. The neat little dwelling, which I had been fortunate enough to purchase for him, two doors below where he then lived, was unaired, and wholly unfit for his reception. Dr. Jones seconded my proposal, that he should be brought here in a sedan, where his daughter could be constantly with him, and sleep in a tent-bed in his apartment, and where he could have every necessary comfort and attendance.

Thank God, he continued to amend surprisingly, considering the violence of the seizure; but remained so weak and lethargic during some days, as to leave a sense of sad dismay upon my heart. The long and bitter frost perhaps retarded his partial recovery; partial, for he had many draw-backs, and has not yet, by any means, recovered that little portion of renovated strength which he gained on his summer excursion to the coast, and into Wales, and which remained with

him till this perilous attack. He could not be removed with safety during the winter's rigour. Meantime Mrs. Smith exerted herself in preparing his new and lightsome habitation, and made it very neat and comfortable; removed all his books, and little furniture, and last Monday Mrs. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas White, and myself, went with him to take possession, and drank tea and supt in his pleasant parlour. He has a good bed-chamber, a neat second room, for Mrs. Smith, if he should again want her nocturnal nearness to his person, and a third for his new servant. I know he will have your fervent wishes for his recovery, and, in that trust, he presents to you his most affectionate respects.

REV. T. S. WHALLEY,

Lichfield, May 15, 1802.

You inquire after my health. It was not good through the rigid and gloomy winter, and has not improved beneath the blooming renovation of the vegetable world. Rheumatism combines with the added weakness entailed upon me by the yet unrecovered accident of spring-twelvemonth, and dizziness of head, tremulous motion of heart, and difficulty of breathing when I walk, are daily returning sensations of a more threatening nature.

My spirits have never permanently recovered the shock of my valued friend Mr. Saville's dangerous seizure in December, and he is so frequently ill, and so imperfectly recovers that portion of his long feeble strength which his last seizure took away, that apprehension for his life sits heavy on my heart; yet, unless prevented by farther increase of disease, we have each promised to visit our friend, Mr. Mitchel, in Worcester-shire, that I may not quit existence without having heard the nightingale: but this gratification has been often averted, that I begin to think its notes are

sounds which destiny interdicts to my ear. Next Monday is fixed for our setting out. I am afraid my rheumatic pains will impel my reluctant course to Buxton again this summer.

These last three weeks the society of dear Mrs. M. Powys, one of the few existing friends of my youth, often beguiled my attention of its anticipating fears, while we recalled the image of our lost Honora, scarcely less dear to Mrs. Powys than to myself. Thus was that charming creature ideally restored to these apartments, and bowers, the scenes of her youth and happiness, and which breathe of her still. Mrs. Powys left me this morning, and a letter to you was in unison with my feelings. I am but too likely to behold her no more, since our habitations are so distant. It is eight years since we met.

You have doubtless seen in the papers, the late sudden death of the celebrated Dr. Darwin. His extinction is universally lamented, from the most operative cause of regret; and while disease may no longer turn the eye of hope upon his rescuing and restoring skill, the poetic fanes lose a splendid source of ornament; philosophic science, an ingenious and daring dictator; and medicinal art, a pillar of transcendent strength.

His son, Dr. Darwin of Shrewsbury, has applied to me for assistance in furnishing materials for a short life of this great man, which may hereafter be requested as a prelude to future editions of his works. Dr. Darwin of Shrewsbury justly observes, that his father's utter dislike to all personal questions, left him entirely in the dark respecting the earlier part of his life, the twenty-four years in which he practised physic in Lichfield, and which passed beneath the unobservant eyes of his own sportive infancy and boyism. He is conscious that they must form a part of Dr. Darwin's existence better known to me, who lived in habitual

intimacy with him from my thirteenth year, the period in which his constellation of talents first beamed upon our city, and which illumined it so long.

I had rather this application had not been made, since my respect for the existing Dr. Darwin will not let me say it nay; since the demands upon my pen are already too heavy for my health, and since that impartial display of both sides the medal, which constitutes valuable biography, may not be given by the filial hand, or presented by another to the filial eye, Dr. Darwin, late of Derby, was a mixed character, illustrious by talent, professionally generous, always hospitable, kind, and charitable to the poor, sometimes friendly, but never amiable. While on abstracted themes his imagination glowed; while on entrance, and on a commencing conversation, his countenance wore a benevolent smile, we invariably found, on its progress, a cold satiric atmosphere around him, repulsing all attempts to interchange the softer sympathies of friendship. Age did not improve his heart, and, on its inherent coldness, poetic authorism, commencing with him after middle-life, engrafted all its irritability, disingenuous arts, and grudging jealousy of others' reputation. As a poet, his genius was luxuriant, yet vigorous, but his taste was fastidious respecting polish, and meritricious in the desire of ornament. As affection was the desideratum of his temperament, so is simplicity that of his verse, so was irreligion that of his judgment. The warm defender of public liberty, he exerted despotism, by resistless sarcasm towards those in mature life, over whom he had natural or acquired powers.

Biography has very seldom characteristic truth, because it is generally manufactured by near relations, or by obliged and partial friends, or by editors, who consider it highly conducive to their own profits on the work, that the author whose writings they publish

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

or republish, should, as a private character, possess the unqualified esteem and admiration of their readers; and they do for him what Queen Elizabeth requested her painters to do for her, they draw a picture without shades.

THOMAS PARK, ESQ.,

Lichfield, June 14, 1802.

Mr. Saville is much gratified and obliged by the distinctness of your recollection concerning the transient, but to him very interesting conversations which he had the honour to obtain from your goodness. You have read him rightly; he is full of ingenuous integrity, and awakened intelligence, which time has nothing chilled. My almost next door neighbour since my twelfth and his twentieth year, – from that far, far distant period, my esteem and friendship for him have never known abatement.

We passed the two last weeks of the last month together in Warwickshire, at the house of our mutual and excellent friend Mr. Mitchel; the abode of hospitality, the bowers of pleasantness. My journey thither had a double motive, the society of our friend Mr. Mitchel and his amiable niece, and her friend, the sprightly and pleasing Mrs. Ironmonger; and the desire of not quitting existence unconscious of the song of Philomel. Lichfield and its environs are too far north for her visitation, and it had never been my lot to find myself in her haunts, when she and her feathered sisters

. . . ‘beat the ear of night
With their contentious throats.’

Mr. Wordsworth having, in his Lyrical ballads, so boldly given Virgil, Ovid, Shakespeare, Milton, and Akenside, the lie, as to the melancholy sweetness of her song, yet farther stimulated my curiosity.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

The nearest haunt of those syrens is a mile and a half from Mr. Mitchel's house. During five successive nights after our arrival, cold, blustering, sunless winds forbade all hope of this music.

I grew impatient, and began to think it the interdiction of my destiny. A glowing and balmy evening at length arrived. Mr. Mitchel took me in his chair, Mr. Saville rode, and the rest of the party, three ladies and a gentleman, walked to the edge of a wild and lonely coppice, through which a clear brook meandered.

We found the concert loud and various. Black-birds, throistles, ring-doves, linnets, larks, &c., united with the, till then, unheard queen of the woods. So fully accompanied, I could judge but imperfectly of her single powers. We staid, however, by the copse till her rivals, of other plume, had slunk to their nests, her 'amorous descant' continuing, and answered by a second nightingale.

I confess I do not think the notes pensive in the degree which her eulogists, of mighty name, had taught me to expect; not so pensive as the woodlark's, and not sweeter, though much more various. Thrice did we visit this harmonious coppice, and always found the melody we sought. If I do not say with Milton, 'most melancholy', at least I abjure Mr. Wordsworth's heterodox epithet, *merry*, for the strains of the nightingale.

REV. DEWHURST BILSBURY,

Lichfield, Oct. 9, 1802.

It is wholly out of my power to contribute to the lustre of your work by the letters of Dr. Darwin. In the whole course of our intimate association at Lichfield I know not that we ever once wrote to each other. Frequent conversations precluded the necessity. Since he resided at Derby our intimacy faded. I heard from

him only on having written to consult him as a physician, and neither sentiment, or criticism, found a place in our seldom and occasional correspondence. I hardly think these letters amount to six in number.

While he lived here he was not in the habit of throwing his imagination into his letters; they were rather hurried over as tasks than written *con amore*. I have often heard him say he did not possess the epistolary graces. He told me one day, when I was about six or seven-and-twenty, that he wished to write to Dr. Franklin, to compliment him upon having united modern science and philosophy; and desired I would put his thoughts into my own language. He took his pen, and throwing on paper the heads of what he purposed saying, desired I would give them verbal ornament, and that he would call next day for the result. He did call; and looking over what I had written, laughingly commended the style; copied the manuscript verbatim in my presence, directed that copy to Dr. Franklin, America, and sent it instantly to the post-office by my father's servant.

I mention the circumstance to shew you that at that time of his life he would not have thanked any one for publishing his letters. I have often heard him give it as an axiom, that literary fame always suffers by the publication of every thing which is below its already-acquired level.

Letters, which are either brilliant by wit, ingenious by allusion, or inventive by fancy, are not below the level of the most eminent reputation; but such, I think, are not the letters of the justly celebrated Darwin.

In biography nothing is more displeasing than a picture without shades. Few but have their defects, and the defects of all public characters are too well known not to subject unqualified eulogium to derision and disgust. We are all aware that 'nature is

nore frugal than to heap together all manner of shining qualities in one glaring mass,' and the mind, like the person, should either be justly drawn, or not at all. A painter might as well omit each appropriate distinction of feature, countenance, and form, because it may not be beautiful; and, like Gay's painter, who pleased nobody and everybody, finish his portraits from casts of Apollo and the Venus, as a biographer omit the foibles and weaknesses, while he records the talents and virtues of the subject of his history.

But then it is not by any means a duty to publish composition never meant for the public eye; and which must mortify its author, could he be conscious of its publication; and that from its incapacity to augment the intellectual glory which had already shone on the world.

Soon after we sustained the loss of this distinguished Being, the now, alas! only Dr. Darwin, wrote to request that I would endeavour to bring together all the circumstances I could recollect of his father's first establishment in Lichfield, and successive years of residence there. I have, in consequence, proceeded a considerable way in my *Memoir*. It will not, from its shortness, be worthy to be called a life, and still less, from my utter ignorance of the habits and incidents which marked the course of that period in which he lived at Derby.

My attempt ought long since to have been finished, but ill-health frequently precluding my use of the pen; the perpetual claims of social engagements upon my time; a ten weeks absence from home, and the incessant and unavoidable business of answering letters from literary strangers, have retarded the progress of my little Darwiniana.

It has been shown to several of my lettered friends, who adjure me to offer it to Dr. Darwin conditionally ~~and~~ viz. that he prints it unmutilated, and in my

name; and they urge, that unless he pledges his honour so to do, I will publish it myself. Its characteristic traits and incidents are not confined solely to Dr. Darwin. Interesting circumstances, and characteristic traits of his friends, are introduced, and also criticism on his writings.

I have spoken of him as he was. Every merit he possessed of intellect and action, is placed in the fullest and fairest light, in which I had power to place it. My anecdotes, as yet, only cover sixty quarto pages, and perhaps eighty will involve all I have to say on the subject.

Be assured I remember with pleasure the prepossessing manner, and richly-blossoming talents of Mr. Bilsbury, in years past,

‘When smooth as Hebe’s his unrazor’d lip,’

and remain, with much esteem, his obedient servant.

WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.,

March 7, 1803.

My work on Darwin is likely to displease, for a period, numbers, perhaps, for one that will approve it. The world of letters seem divided in two wide extremes; one half considering him as infinitely the first genius of his age, both as to poetic system, and execution; the other half affecting to hold similar opinions of his writings with those so injuriously avowed in the Pursuits of Literature. I accidentally took up a *Critical Review* last winter, which says of some writer, in derision – ‘he professes to like Gibbon’s prose and Darwin’s poetry.’ All who implicitly enlist themselves in either of these divisions will dislike my work, and perhaps publicly abuse it.

The same extremes of opinion prevail amongst his acquaintance respecting his moral character; either

exalt him as having been almost superior to human frailty, and exclaim with Sir Brooke Boothby - 'Darwin was one of the best men I have ever known;' or stigmatised him as an empiric in medicine, a Jacobin in politics; deceitful to those who trusted him, covetous of gain, and an alien to his God. What can I hope for, who spoke of him as he was.

WALTER SCOTT, ESQ.,

Lichfield, July 29, 1803.

You must not consider my little work as a life of Darwin; it neither assumes nor merits a title so responsible. I have not science, I have not sufficient knowledge of his philosophical correspondence, to make any such pretension; and of his literary life, since he left this city in 1781, I know nothing, except through the medium of his publications. To present a faithful portrait of his disposition, his manners, his heart; - to draw aside the domestic curtain; to delineate the connubial and parental conduct of his youth; the Petrarchan attachment of his middle life; its resemblance to that of the bard of Vacluse, but its better fate; to analyse his poetic claims; and to present singular instances of philosophical love in the eventful history of one of his distinguished friends; - these, and these only, must you expect from my feminine Darwiniana. Johnson has had the manuscript on a high price purchase these three months. Why he delays to produce it, I know not. He is a very laconic personage, and has upon him the penphobia.

DR. WHALLEY, Mendip Lodge, near Bristol,
Lichfield, August 16, 1803.

O! MY LONG DEAR FRIEND, - I knew you would pity the wreck of all my earthly comforts - the desolation of my soul. It is extreme - it is total. You enjoined me not to write to you till I had seen or heard an-

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

nounced the happy event, in which your letter had taught me most truly to rejoice. In vain did I search, from time to time, my own newspaper; in vain enquire of the Falconers if they knew whether your marriage had taken place. My paper was silent on the theme, and they could not inform me, else you might be sure I had been amongst the foremost to congratulate you and your bride. I concluded some unforeseen circumstance had delayed your nuptials. Oh! be they blest!

Interested as you were in the destiny of my dear lost friend,¹ and ever kindly affectionate towards him, I think you will wish to know the sad particulars; therefore will I do violence to the helpless lassitude of my mind, and strive to record them. You know that from the nervous fever in 1792, under which he some months languished, he has been subject to temporary, though comparatively slight returns of the disorder; that in December 1801 he had a violent return of it, which put his life in extreme peril, and confined him some weeks to his chamber. His health remained feeble and shaken from that time till he returned from Park Gate in September last, when he seemed greatly renovated, and passed the whole of last winter in better health than during many preceding ones – a very slight touch of the influenza his sole disorder. O! the joy, the comfort, the balmy peace of heart which resulted to me from perceiving this amendment! In April he began to complain, at times, of stricture in his breast, a slight pain there, and a difficulty of breathing in going up stairs, or up hill. A disorder so entirely new to his frame startled me, but neither of us supposed the symptom dangerous. His appetite, his spirits good, and the malady apparently trivial and infrequent; yet, alas! I am now convinced these were the presages of that disease which destroyed him. He

¹ Saville.

had business at his native Ely, and through motives of strong local attachment, longed to revisit the scenes of his youth; and he assured me that he believed the journey thither on horseback, by gentle stages, would remove the oppression from his breast or lungs. He had friends at Ashby and Leicester, with whom he meant, and did rest a day or two on his way. . . .

His health, however, appeared to wear every mark of renovation till within half an hour of his death. He had dined with me and another friend that day, with appetite and gaiety of spirit; had promised to meet us at a public concert at 7 that evening, at which hour myself and several of his other friends went thither. His daughter dressed his hair at half-past six. He made no complaints, but jested with her about her performance. Soon after he cut a corn, which pained him, and in that operation he had been stooping over his stomach some time, when suddenly a tremendous seizure of the late kind attacked him, and in a quarter of an hour struck him from the land of the living. Meantime, O my friend! I was listening to music, and expecting him every moment to enter the room. About eight (when, O God! he was no more), I began to grow excessively alarmed that he did not appear. I was sent for out of the room. Several of my friends, to whom the dread event was told, followed my chair and crowded round to support me, when the event was broke to me. I will not attempt to describe my agonies. How I lived through that night is my wonder; no tear could I shed during sixteen hours. O! it was this day fortnight! and from that day's close the world has been a desert to your friend, never more to bear the buds of cheerfulness and earthly hope for her; breath, not life, remains to her. They hurried me out of Lichfield to the house of a kind, compassionate friend, some twelve miles hence, that I might not hear a knell, whose sound must have cost me my reason

or my life. My dear, dear friend was followed to his last earthly home by all the clergy and vicars, and with choral honours. They tell me, though the concourse was immense, scarcely an eye was without tears, and that in no person's memory has any death been so universally mourned in this town. His heart was the seat of every refined intelligence, every generous, every gentle virtue; and all beamed out in that expressive countenance, in the conciliating tones of that voice. All now are eager to assert those truths, and do his memory enthusiastic justice. Thirty-seven years have I been blessed with his society, his friendship, and the emanation of his virtues, and I now find they were the prop of every exertion of my soul.

Dear soul, it was never in his power to save money. The maintenance of Mrs. Smith and her children came upon him when his best days were passed; and within the last eleven years his nervous disorders prevented all professional emolument without the pale of this church. But for my assistance, therefore, he and they must have felt the deprivations of penury. Thank God, it was in my power to avert that evil, and all its pangs; but his family are left without any self-resources from its evils. Mrs. Smith was never habitually kind, or grateful for my friendship to her and her children. I have not seen her almost these twelve months, owing to her resentment for my having, in conjunction with her father, opposed her wish of a ruinous marriage. She has, in the interim, rejected her father's repeated request, that she would accept my offered reconciliation. Yet still she is his child, and to his dear remembrance I offer up my resentments. Neither herself, her mother, nor Honora, shall know the want of competent subsistence, such as they have been used to, while it is in my power to supply them. They shall live rent free in the pleasant mansion which I purchased for my lost friend two years back, and of which

he was seventeen months a delighted inhabitant. It is in the Close, two doors lower than that very inferior habitation where he lived when you were here; and they shall have from me a hundred a year, and fifty Mrs. Smith has of her own. Her eldest daughter is married, and her son in business with his uncle, though dependent upon him. I have not yet been able to see Mrs. Smith or Honora, but I mean to do it soon. Heaven knows how I shall support the interview.

I mean to break off all my correspondence. It had become so extensive and complicated, as to require very cheerful industry and daily attention to perform its duties.

Cheerfulness and industry are gone for ever from me. I cannot bear to see my neighbours, except those who were with me when I sustained the shock of intelligence which has left me comfortless.

O! how changed is this long dear mansion. Silence is in the apartments, in their surrounding bowers! Never more shall the voice of mirth or music know them.

Adieu, and for ever adieu, my dear friend: consider me as among those whom you have loved and lost, and kindly pray that my deprived existence may not be long protracted.

MRS. CHILDERS, Sen.,

Lichfield, Sept. 23, 1803.

And my friend, to a letter kind as your last, I cannot be silent, averse to the pen as dispirited indolence renders me.

Well am I aware that recent experience of anguish, in some degree similar, and perhaps not less poignant, gives you unquestionable right to exhort me to resignation, and to stimulate my energies; but, dear Mrs. Childers, comforts and inducements remain to you which exist not in the blank of my future existence.

They are powerful to restore you to the level of your former peace, your industry, and cheerfulness. However precious to your heart might have been the protracted life of the husband you lost, you still retain the daily and hourly presence and conversation of several equally dear to you; for to a tender mother what can be dearer than such children as you are blest with, in the prime of ripened youth and excellence? Yes, they remain to render the world still an interesting scene to you, full of consolation, nay, of joy.

Friends remain to me in Lichfield whom I very much esteem, and with whom I can often converse; but, in comparison of him I have lost, they are the friends of yesterday. He was all that remained to me of my youthful years, and best days, and in him, those whom my heart as passionately loved, my sister, my Honora Sneyd, my father, have all died again.

Thus no possibility of any thing resembling recompense exists for me on the wide, wide earth, since 'I can no longer talk with Saville, or find his steps in my mansion and my bowers;' – since of all the scenes around me; of all my favourite pursuits; of whatever delighted my ear, my eye, and my understanding, his society was the vivifying soul.

Gleams of cheerfulness seem, at intervals, to return, when I am conversing with intelligent people; but those gleams only faintly play on the surface of my mind; a deep sense of desolation has its dwelling in my heart. Hence the often but assumed, and always frivolous gaiety of mixed society, must be disgusting. Dissipation has an irritating and caustic influence on sorrow.

Beneath this consciousness I shrink from encountering the ever-circling round of parties, in which I have so long been accustomed to mingle. Public calamity and danger always crowd our little city with gay and dissipated military men, and our parties with strangers.

I, who visited almost every genteel family in the place, cannot resume them partially; and surely the gradations of subsiding anguish should succeed each other calmly, not disturbed by uncongenial gaiety.

You, my friend, have not only duties, but tender affectionate interests, which combine to re-energise your mind. I have duties, and they shall not be neglected; but I have none of those interests left. My duties, however, do not, like yours, involve the necessity of mingling in complicated society. It will not miss me, nor have I any to lead into it, to whom my countenance and support are necessary.

Time, the best friend of the deprived great physician for wounds deep as that under which my heart has bled, and still bleeds,—begins somewhat to tranquillise my anguish; but exertion continues irksome. I can read, or rather pore over books, and that is all of intellectual employment from which I do not recoil.

The reflections you draw from the lapse of sixty-seven years, which had passed over the head of my dearest friend, are just; but very uncommon exemptions from the general decays and infirmities of such ripe existence, combined to allure and support my belief of his longevity. Though his once luxuriant and raven hair became tintured with grey in middle life, and his temples thus prematurely had borne the blossoms of the grave, yet powder always concealed those dim prognostics; and a constitution of serene, though never robust health, without one tendency to chronic disease; the purity of his morals; the innocent gaiety of his spirit; the temperance and undeviating sobriety of his whole life; the perfect shapeliness of his limbs to his last hour, with a form neither slender, nor in the slightest degree corpulent; the healthy hue, and firm texture of his gums and teeth, in which there was neither decay, nor loss, nor blemish; the silver clearness of his ever-harmonious voice in conversation, in

reading, and in singing; intellects, whose strength and glowing fervour time had nothing chilled; all these circumstances appeared to my mind in vivid array against the occasional and sudden, though generally transient return of nervous symptoms, the vestiges of a long and dangerous nervous fever in the summer 1792. From that period they obliged him to decline all professional engagements beyond the limits of this choir, since he could never depend upon their omitting to seize him on the evening when he might have pledged himself to a public orchestra. But then he was often exempt from that sudden faintness during many days, and sometimes weeks; and then, in the intervals, he was all himself, his early and best self, alike when he conversed, or read, or poured the soul-breathing strains of his full, clear, mellow, and singularly extensive voice. It was, at will, a tenor, a contra-tenor, or bass.

He had always an exterior so uncommonly juvenile, that at thirty he seemed not more than twenty; at forty appeared scarcely thirty; nor ever, even in this final year, did he, when dressed, appear to be more, if so much, as fifty. Only two days preceding his dissolution, he met at my house a large conversation party. Ah, with what grace and spirit did he recite by heart Courtenay's Character, in verse, of the complicated and stupendous Dr. Johnson! On his leaving the room soon after, during a few minutes, how did two gentlemen, strangers to him till then, praise the gracefulness of his address, the spirit of his conversation, the justness, the music, and variety of his recitation!

Almighty God! little did any of us imagine that a vital lamp, so luminous and clear, both corporally and intellectually, was so near its everlasting extinction! Nay, how little was that extinction to be foreseen twenty minutes before it happened!

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

To this moment the event often seems as a terrible dream; and when reflection insists upon its reality, existence darkens beneath the assertion into a night, on which the morning of gladness will break no more.

Dear friend, I have trespassed largely upon your indulgence in this repetition of mournful descent. My pen, like my thoughts, cling to one subject.

I am tempted to insert an epitaph which I made upon my lamented friend.

The Dean and Chapter have given me leave to erect a monument for him in the transit aisle of this cathedral. The design is simply elegant. It will be placed in a gothic niche, constituting its frame. That niche is an oblong square, with an elliptic arch above. The whole of the niche is filled up with dark grey marble. Upon that a tablet of white marble contains the name, and date, and the verses. The square is separated from the arch above, by broken fragments of white marble, as pieces of a rock.

Upon those fragments, and as carved from them, stands a beautiful antique urn, of the same spotless material. It stands in the arch, and a column of smoke ascends from it, emblematic of exhaling life. It will cost me an hundred pounds, and never never could I part with money so willingly, as for this last last tribute to the memory of my dearest friend.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY

OF

JOHN SAVILLE,

Forty-eight years Vicar-choral of this church.
He died August the 2d, 1803, aged sixty-seven

Ones in the heart, cold in yon narrow cell,
Did each mild grace, each ardent virtue dwell;
Kind aid, kind tears for others' want and woe,

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

For others' joy the gratulating glow;
And skill to mark, and eloquence to claim
For genius in each art the palm of fame.
Ye choral walls, you lost the matchless song,
When the last silence stiffen'd on that tongue!
Ah! who may now your pealing anthems raise,
In soul-pour'd tones of fervent prayer and praise?
Saville, thy lips, twice on thy final day,
Here breath'd, in health and hope, the sacred lay.
Short pangs, ere night, the fatal signal gave,
Quench'd the bright sun for thee,—and op'd the
grave!

Now from that graceful form and beaming face,
Insatiate worms the lingering likeness chase;
But thy pure spirit fled, from pains and fears,
To sinless,—changeless,—everlasting spheres.
Sleep, then, pale mortal frame, in yon low shrine,
'Till angels wake thee with a note like thine!

The last line is Dr. Johnson's. My imagination refused to supply me with one equally applicable, therefore was it adopted.

REV. T. S. WHALLEY,

Lichfield, Sept. 28, 1803.

My dear friend, — A gentleman told me, a few days since, that he had read an account, in a newspaper, of the death of your excellent mother, together with a character of her, and a mention of ninety-nine years announced to be her age. No such event has had a place in the paper I take in,— the *English Chronicle* or *Whitehall Evening Post*; neither had your marriage. Thence my long ignorance of that event.

Conscious of Mrs. Whalley senior's very ripe existence, I did not think it had reached the verge of a century, but believed ninety-three or four had been

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

the utmost. Be that as it may - neither the far-lengthened flight of days or years, nor yet those infirmities from which your beloved mother was exempt - nothing but the sight of hopeless and great bodily sufferings, can prevent your thinking it too soon to lose a dear friend, even after the most protracted longevity.

I am glad this second deprivation was withheld till you had found an object of affection equally dear with the two you have lost within the short space of a couple of years. You grieve, but you do not sicken at the sun:

‘The world is still an interesting scene,
And full of joy for you.’

As you lament, so did I lament the loss even of my dear ‘child-changed father,’ though after the deep eclipse of his shining intellects; since balmy sleep, relished food, exemption from pain, and the never-extinguished delight he took in my attentions to him, rendered his dim existence a cherished blessing to me, nor could I resign it without much of that tender regret and sorrow, which I know you feel; but, as to you, so to me one dear friend remained on earth to sooth and console me; one with whom I could hold daily and precious converse. Beneath that graciously continued boon of Heaven, my soul revived, as yours will revive, to its sensibility of the charms of nature, the exhilaration of society, and the delights of literature. So fared it with me through the course of thirteen peaceful, cheerful, happy years, after my filial tears were exhaled: Now, on all those sources of gladness, the pall of the last-left friend of my youth is fallen; and it is dark and impervious.

Alas! what an egotist is woe! I meant to have dwelt on your loss and consolations, and behold me sliding back into my own anguish!

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

Except these words – ‘the bell rings, and I must go to church,’ the following were the last I heard my dear friend speak: ‘Look at this beautiful engraving of a design for a monument to Handel. I know you dislike writing epitaphs after having written so many; but you must write one more for me, to occupy the blank space here left for an inscription.’

I replied, ‘We will talk of that hereafter – but now play a concerto with me.’ He did so till the evening prayer bell rang, and he went cheerfully away – to return no more!

Alas! I have written one more epitaph – obeyed the injunction of those almost latest words, though their meaning applied to his adored Handel. O Heaven, that they should prove an unconscious prophecy of his own impending fate! – so nearly impending!

You, I know, will write, if you have not already written, an epitaph on your first beloved wife, and on your mother. I hope you will send them to me. I always love your compositions, but poignant sympathy will give triple dearness to these. Adieu! Adieu!

MR. TODD,

Lichfield, Dec. 15, 1803.

AN, Sir, I fear you have thought me remiss and unmindful of my many obligations to you, by suffering your kind letter of July the 12th to remain so long unacknowledged. It had not been so, but that deep anxiety, terminating in irreparable loss, threw my mind into a state incompatible with the discharge of its serene and pleasing duties. A short time before I received your last, the dearest of all my friends returned from a month’s excursion into Cambridgeshire, a feeble convalescent, after three dangerous attacks sustained in that absence, and generously concealed from his family and myself. We received cheerful letters from him, which bore no note of the dread

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

symptoms by which he had been assailed. The alarming state in which we received him back, put to flight every thought of my purposed journey to Buxton; yet the medical assistance he received here, seemed to have subdued his disease, and he recovered to more than his preceding level of health, strength, and vivacity. Ah! cunning flattery of art and nature! amidst their exhilarating promises, and the congratulating smiles of his many friends, he remained near three weeks, yes, till within twenty minutes of his death.

With him the records of my youthful life are passed away; with him they were mutual and poignant remembrances; with my friends of later connection they are but cold hearsays. When I speak of them, I do but think they listen indulgently to what they deem the uninteresting descriptions of advanced life, fond to tell the tale of other times. So will it be with all who survive those dear contemporaries who had ran with them the sprightly race of youth and sensibility:

'Those best of days that crown life's year;
That light upon the eyelids dart,
And melting joys upon the heart.'

Time, which had silvered the locks of my departed friend, had not, in the slightest degree, chilled his native and fervent enthusiasm; his generous credulity towards all apparent worth. O! he was one of the very few,

'Who uniformly bear to life's mild eve,
Immaculate, the manners of the morn.'

My soul's convulsive shock when I was sent for home
from the concert to meet the dreadful annunciation! —
Oh Sir, you have a feeling heart, and will not wonder

that all lesser considerations vanished from my attention, and returned not to it through many succeeding weeks. Till Saturday seven-night, these gates have formed the impassable limits of my feeble steps. It was not till then that I could assume fortitude to pass the silent grave, in which my soul's dearest comforts for ever lie, till it shall itself be emancipated, and seek, as I trust, the realms of pardon and everlasting peace.

Four months endurance of irretrievable privation, have enabled me to wear the semblance of cheerfulness in conversing with that herd of acquaintance, from whom it were folly to expect genuine commiseration; but it is only semblance. My heart feels as if it was encircled by barriers of ice against all interest in present circumstances; — ice which only dissolves when, by the power of recollection, I recal the days and years that are flown.

Johnson the bookseller purchased, and was in possession of my *Memoirs* of our late splendid poet, Darwin, in May last. Far from being impatient of its long-delayed appearance, I wish it might never pass the press. In it, however, at length, it is, and I receive the proof sheets, from time to time, by the post. I have a miserably careless eye, and it revises unassisted. He is for ever gone who used to correct all my writings, whether in prose or verse, with judicious skill and vigilant attention. There could be no better judge of elegance in either style. Mr. Johnson's press-corrector revises the proofs before they are sent to me, and he seems to be a man of letters. Several misprints, however, I have detected which had escaped his notice — one curious instance: I wrote, 'Sir Brooke Boothby had much external elegance; elegance which time hath but little tarnished.' It came to me printed, 'Sir Brooke Boothby had much external *eloquence*; eloquence which time had but little tarnished!'

With what sneers would the reviewers have marked the nonsense, and believed it mine, desiring me, with mock respect, to instruct their ignorance concerning the meaning of external eloquence, and tarnished eloquence.

I have desired Johnson to send you an early copy – a poor return for rich donations from the press, which I have received from you. If not the widow's, it is the woman's mite in biography. The biography of a philosopher! Ah! is it not Omphale wielding the club of Hercules? Adieu!

DR. WHALLEY,

Wolverhampton, December 31, 1803.

MY DEAR FRIEND, - You have seen, you have conversed with my Clarissa, the by me much-beloved, the angelic, the persecuted. The instant I heard she was at Bath, I fervently wished that chance might throw you together; assured, as I felt, that the attraction of kindred minds would operate between you. It is necessary to account why I never mentioned to you that I had been honoured by the fervent attachment of a young creature so highly amiable, interesting, and accomplished, and whose mind was so endowed and so noble; why, through the seven years which have elapsed since first I knew the partial fervour of her attachment, I have reserved it the unpartaken and secret treasure of my soul. Before we ever met, I heard that the bishop's only daughter was a girl of pleasing and engaging manners; that her mother, whose violent temper and dispicable avarice were talked of everywhere, hated and tormented her; that she had had a youthful and fond friendship for her beautiful neighbour, Miss Turton, since Mrs. Plummer; that this attachment was prohibited at Harlow Place as a crime and disgrace, and the lovely young friends were forcibly kept asunder.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

These circumstances were represented to me by my then townswoman, Mrs. Parker, the aunt of Miss Turton. Well born, well educated, and blameless in her conduct as Miss Turton was, Mrs. Parker attributed the mean jealousy of this attachment at Harlow Place as the effect of pride and ambition, that thought intimacy degrading to a daughter of their house, where it was unsanctioned by high rank. Mrs. Parker related other similar persecutions, which excited pity, that I then little thought would ever be so deeply interested as it has since proved. In a few months after I heard those particulars, on the 22nd of July, in the year '96, while I was packing up my clothes to go to Buxton the next day, my maid came to tell me that the bishop and Miss Clarissa were below stairs, waiting to see me. It was a few minutes ere I could go down to them. They were in the large dining-room. On opening the door, I saw the bishop in earnest conversation with the person who has the care of his affairs in this town, and Miss Clarissa, then only seventeen years of age, standing before my picture, with her hands folded, and in her whole light form an air of tender enthusiasm, and interesting grace. She turned towards me on my entrance, with such a look of beaming and endearing kindness – but I know that when you spoke of me with regard you saw the fellow to it. After civilities had passed between the bishop and myself, he resumed his earnest conversation with his agent, and left his charming daughter at liberty to tell me, that my writings had inspired her with the warmest predilection in favour of their author; that it was the first wish of her heart to become my friend, and through life that I should consider her as such. On the bishop turning his attention towards us, her manners instantly changed from the warmth of confidence and friendship to a reserved politeness; and I perfectly understood the reason. In the course of

that conversation, the bishop gave me a voluntary assurance that I should never be removed from this dear home of my youth, while he remained in the see. He added, that he had rejected a number of advantageous proposals from various people, who wished to become his tenants, rather than disturb me; nay, that he had even resisted the wishes of his own nephew to live here, from the consciousness that change of abode, after such long residence, was likely to affect my happiness.

Words cannot express how much I felt obliged to his lordship for a promise which laid to sleep a painful and perpetual apprehension. Thus bound to him in gratitude, I should be infinitely pained to know that I had become, however involuntarily, the source of any domestic inquietude to him. *Clarissa* had previously told me she hoped to procure another half hour's conversation with me by coming up to afternoon prayers, anticipating the hour by fifteen minutes, and passing another fifteen with me after church, and in consequence should ask me, in the bishop's hearing, to procure some choral music, and to accompany her to church. My lord did not oppose the plan. They were to set out for E— at half-past five in the eve. From that hour we have met only four times; and those interviews short and constrained.

When I saw her the next summer, she told me that the insuppressive warmth, with which she had vindicated me from base aspersions from your new friend, and my old enemy, and from some others, had subjected her to the imputation of an 'absurd, romantic partiality', and to a prohibition against ever showing me more than common civility. *Mrs. Cornwallis* being in London, when *Clarissa* was at Harlow Place this summer, upon telling my lord that she wanted to make some purchases from the shops at Lichfield, he obtained his leave to call upon *Mrs. Falconer* and

myself. We were then two hours in uninterrupted conversation. My dear friend¹ was in Cambridge-shire, and my heart gave no foreboding whisper of the impending misery of my future days. I then learnt from dear Clarissa the long and severe maternal tyranny which had blighted all the joys of her youth; every wish studiously thwarted; hourly insulted for those talents, those sentiments, and those pursuits which form all the superiority and glory of her character; her charities, her disinterestedness, her contempt for the pageantries of society, her love of books and literary retirements, and the added crying sin of esteeming me.

Not only Mrs. Cornwallis but my lord has a great dislike for female friendships, and deems them romantic, and, where there is the least inequality of station, highly improper. Always inspecting her letters, regular correspondence between Clarissa and myself was precluded, and sometimes years have passed away without my either seeing or hearing from her. To this coerced and afflicting estrangement, both of conversation and writing, we must submit. Violent augmentation of family discord would ensue to Clarissa were we to correspond, and that correspondence should be discovered, and discovered it would be. She believes, she knows that my lord's plighted word respecting my continuance in these dear walls, would not avail beneath the revenge to which such a discovery would instigate. Hard, very hard, that an intercourse so innocent and laudable should be prohibited, and punished as a crime! but so it is, and we cannot help ourselves. Were the name I have given her to reach the ears of her parents, the meaning of that name, consciousness would instantly point out, and that alone, as implying a heavy censure

¹ Saville.

on their conduct, would be avenged with every possible violence

I have lost all that made life delightful; but if I should ever be banished these precincts, my cup of misery, already full, would run over, and every little comfort follow my departed happiness. You are, my dear friend, in one material respect, entirely mistaken, or rather misinformed, concerning my loved and most deserving Clarissa. I solemnly assure you not one of her many sighs arises from disappointed love. The man who deserted her on the eve of her purposed nuptials, never had her affections. Unexceptionable in his person, and of great wealth, his addresses were approved by her parents, when a few years ago, they were first pressed upon her acceptance. No prior attachment existing in her bosom, by the wretchedness of her domestic life, its utter and severe slavery respecting all her friendships, she was induced to a reluctant acquiescence. She then, as she has since experienced, found it impossible to school her heart into love for that young man – and, as I am informed from others, some libertine indulgences on his part reaching her ear, she clung to them as a refuge, and pleaded them as a reason for retracting her consent. He went abroad for some time but on his return re-proposed himself. She was then in a terrible state of health. His constancy of heart was pleaded against the youthful infidelity of his senses; and the passionate concern he showed for her illness and danger, watching almost constantly by her couch, made that impression on her gratitude to which her heart was impregnable – her dearest brother and friend for ever lost – the victim of parental opposition to his worthy and unexceptionable choice! her situation at home more and more distressing, as time rolled on, and as ripened womanhood and blameless conduct increased her right to the unrestrained power of choosing her own female friends;

yet that right withheld with even augmented rigour! Thus she was again induced to try if a great and important change of situation might not lessen her miseries, though her heart told her it could give her nothing resembling happiness; besides, her spirits, weakened by disease, seemed to lose the power of contending with her destiny. Settlements were drawn, equipages bespoke, and blended armorials engraven on them, and on the plate. She continued extremely ill, with occasional fits of delirium. In those situations, her appointed husband often watched alone by her couch.

After having done so one day of recurring delirium, the next morning he told my lord that he had discovered it was not for his happiness to be united to Miss Clarissa; and everything was entirely and for ever broken off, to the sincere satisfaction of the fair deserted, since the nearer she had approached the irremediable marriage bourn, the more strongly she felt the apprehended guilt of plighting at the altar those vows of love which her virgin heart refused to sanction, and whose power to fulfil appeared to her more than doubtful; therefore was she contented rather to bear the ills she had, than to fly to others of a new complexion, tinged with self-reproach: a misery yet a stranger to the purest and sincerest heart that ever beat in the human bosom.

She suspects that, in her wanderings of reason, she disclosed her deep-felt reluctance to those impending nuptials, and hence her secret heart acquits the deserter of any crime towards her. These particulars, commencing with Mr. J.'s renewed address, were from herself. Thus you see, dear friend, no thorns are amongst the willows my fair Clarissa has worn, and you will be glad to hear it. Time and chance may break up her filial chains, but, in a mind like hers, the ingratitude and desertion of all she loved had been a barbed and envenomed dart. Let not these particulars transpire; but if you hear the charming creature

pitied for woes she does not feel, you may assert that she harbours no regret for the change of sentiment in her destined bridegroom, but thinks him better lost than found . . .

DR WHALLEY,

[Early in 1804.]

MY DEAR FRIEND, Few have been my interviews with the fascinating, accomplished, and high-souled Clarissa, and seldom and restrained as our correspondence, I admire her beyond expression, and love her with passionate tenderness. The fervent, disinterested attachment of such a heart, originally and solely inspired by my publications, I have ever considered as the most flattering and precious circumstance of my authorism. Your charming and just pictures of her in all the lovely varieties of countenance and attitude, which elevated intelligence and poignant sensibility throw over her pleasing features and graceful form, give her back to my remembrance with the sweetest interest. O! that such an angelic creature, with all her inevitable consciousness of spotless virtue, and superior, O! how very superior, intelligence to the generality of her sex, should be doomed to feel herself an object of contempt and hatred to one parent, and of suspicious disapprobation to the other, restrained and abridged in every direction, of her pure and noble-minded pursuits! That you have reason to suspect hopeless love increases her domestic infelicity, and dips the darts of anguish in double poison, I am very sorry. That she never loved Mr. Jackson, I have laid before you the proofs. If you are not mistaken as to the passion, though you were as to its object, that circumstance makes her situation hopeless, so long as either of her parents live; it chains her to the galley of tyranny and oppression. Succeeding so ill in one attempt to free herself from the present galling yoke,

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

by submitting to assume another, she will hardly be induced, if she is hopelessly attached, to repeat the experiment; else such a lovely young creature, with prospects of great wealth, must have a train of young and affluent lovers, from which her judgment might surely select one not utterly unworthy to possess a blessing, above the price of gold or gems. It is hard that our attachment to each other should be a secret, the disclosure of which must involve as much distress and misery to both of us as if we were of different sex, and our intercourse guilty.

You have taken the exact measure of my devoted attachment to these melancholy deprived precincts. Always too fervent, that which made them joyless has enhanced their preciousness in my estimation. An increase of misery past expression would result to me on banishment from them, and she would find the consciousness insupportable, of having been the innocent cause; while a misfortune so extreme to her poor friend, could meet no consolation in her society. The impossibility of our ever meeting or writing again, while her oppressors are in existence, would be involved in the discovery. I am, therefore, most thankful to you for the counsel you gave the dear enthusiast.

MRS. BLORE,

Lichfield, May 17, 1804.

I do not wonder at your surprise not to have met, in my late volume on the character of Dr. Darwin, a name which ought not to have been omitted in any record of Lichfield, during the many years in which he who bore it was one of its brightest ornaments; a name consecrated by native talents, by science of many species, by all the generous virtues and engaging graces. Be assured my free-agency was severely coerced in this omission. For his peace' sake, I was

constrained to throw upon my pen the chain of this seeming pusillanimous silence.

Mr. Saville always shrunk, with painful sensation, from every thing which was in any degree likely, out of the pale of his profession, to draw the public attention towards himself. Even in the zenith of his professional powers and exertions, he seemed more hurt than gratified, when he saw their praise in print. Modesty so invincible, without auxiliary motives, would have implored, and perhaps irresistibly implored, my silence; but he knew that my pure and disinterested attachment to his unblemished worth, had subjected me to unworthy reflections, and, therefore, no arguments, no entreaties of mind, could have obtained his permission to present the just portrait of his talents and virtues to general scrutiny.

The *Memoirs of Darwin* were written when my mind had no consciousness how near it stood to the brink of its desolation. If it had fallen into the gulf before that work had been finished and deposited with the bookseller, it had never seen the light; but if its composition could have been subsequent to the loss I mourn, no dread of imputed partiality, or of renewed blame, could have withheld my fervent testimony to Saville's worth.

Devoted as he was to botanic studies, you are mistaken in supposing that he was a member of the Botanic Society which Dr. Darwin attempted to establish here. He was solicited to be of it, but in vain, from the consciousness that compliance must have involved him in successive tasks for his pen. You know his aversion to using it, though he wrote with so much ease, perspicuity and grace. He knew the Doctor was too busy, and Sir Brooke Boothby too dissipated to undertake those translations from the *Latin*, of which their plan included the necessity; and he knew also that they would not have delegated that

employment to Jackson, if they could have induced himself to undertake it. Therefore, as he used to say, 'I kept myself out of the scrape.'

Your warm approbation of my Darwinian volume is very grateful to me; and yet more grateful is your complaint of its desideratum on the subject of our mutual friend. Ah! if the omission had not been wholly involuntary, my conscience must have severely embittered your mild reproach. I have been gratified by warm testimonies in favour of my book from people of lettered eminence; – but, O! those eyes which would most have glowed over such testimonies, long ere they could arrive, were closed for ever!

I know not if the *Memoirs* have been reviewed. I never voluntarily look into anonymous strictures upon my publications. I see them committing too much injustice upon others to expect any justice from them to myself; and there is no pleasure in poking into incomprehensible objections, and malicious sneers.

LEE PHILIPS, Esq., of Mayfield,
Lichfield, June 1, 1804.

It gratifies me to hear you say that you will always cherish the memory of our lost Saville. He esteemed and loved you, I think, above all his many friends, his daughter, her children, and myself excepted; and well did you take the measure of his worth.

This blooming season, succeeding to the long sterility, but deepens the melancholy sense of my loss in his prized society. I was always fond of flowers; but, perfectly satisfied with the great variety of tints and odours which those of a common garden supply, I did not partake, but secretly deplored, as the misfortune they really were to him, his botanic knowledge, and thirst for so immense a possession of rare plants and flowers; – since their culture was difficult, troublesome, and expensive, engrossing a great deal of time which,

THE SWAN OF LITCHFIELD

his admirable talents considered, might have been better employed

But over the charms of the rising and varying year, our enthusiasms were in perfect unison. When we were together, scarcely a fine day of spring, summer, or autumn passed away, that did not witness our heart-thrilled exclamations of exhaustless wonder and grateful praise. We were never weary of applying these words to our sensations, to which no other words were so applicable

‘These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty, thine this universal frame,
So wondrous fair!’

A spirit thus allied to mine in devotional, in scenic, in harmonic, and in poetic ardours, I shall never again meet on earth, at least with opportunity of frequent association. That consciousness saddens all creation with much more than wintry gloom. But let me not ungratefully forget how many years of youth, of ripened and of fading life, were blessed by that friendship, which now the grave has swallowed up.

MRS. — ,

Buxton, July 17, 1804.

I AM shocked that your darling child, my little god-daughter, should have been exposed, on the 7th instant, to a tempest of so much violence, and that on the dreary and unsheltered vastness of the East-Moor. The buildings here had a narrow escape that day; since instantaneously, with one cannon-like explosion, a ball of fire, the size of a melon, passed over the old hall, and scathed a tree in the opposite garden, at about fifty yards distance. It fell before the company at the hotel had risen from dinner, which I had been constrained from attending by the commencing tempest. It was fortunate for my credit that it warned

me to hide my fears in solitude, for I am utterly unable to suppress the violent nervous agitation into which I am thrown by the flashing and the noise.

I had hoped that the extinction, which has gloomed my remaining life, would have rendered me superior to affright, under every circumstance which may seem to threaten its duration. That such a quiescent effect has not ensued to me beneath electric storms, proves that my trepidation from their influence is merely corporal, and out of the control of my mind. I hope little Annie caught no cold from the rain; received no impression of dismay so deep as to fix her a trembling coward through life, under every return of an exploding atmosphere.

Your letter is doubtless at Lichfield awaiting my return, since it has not followed me hither. Concerning 'those long lists of accusation, those contemptuous expressions,' which you say are contained in that to which it replies, I have no consciousness.

The very frivolous excuses which you made for having kept an old friend's book unread in your possession during several months, struck me with an indelible impression of incompatibility with affectionate regard for the writer, and with any respect for her talents.

I am an ingenuous creature; as I feel I speak, or I write; except to people whose slights are, either from their mental incapacity, or literary jealousy, beneath my notice. It is then, too, that I can scorn 'the weakness of complaint,' and avoid the 'bitterness of reproach;' but where I have esteemed and loved, I cannot dress my language, either oral or scriptural, in cold civility, or feigned kindness.

If I had thought, as you do, that the suppression of resentment was an owed delicacy and duty of friendship, I must have retreated from our intimacy in gradual and cold alienation.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

I am sorry that illness prevented your coming to Buxton. Yours is a life of great value, and it is one of your first, perhaps your very first duty, to attend to yourself in all things which respect your health.

We remove from hence to Matlock to-morrow seven-night, and purpose staying there a week. If you can, without the least hazard, come over to either place, while I am a sojourner there, I hope you will; and I thank you and Dr. S. for your kind invitation to myself and Susan; but we are four of us, for my man and maid are with me; all your sons being at home, must make so large an addition to your already large family, very inconvenient. It is not your kindly struggling to suppress the testimonies of that inconvenience which can prevent my sense of its inevitable existence. Therefore, and only therefore, is it that I cannot think of being your guest this summer.

Next week was, in the last fatal year, the final week of my dear lost friend's existence. Its Thursday, the dreadful anniversary when vanishes for ever the sole remaining, though but ideal, consolation of my deprived existence. Oh it is yet something to be able to say to myself - This day twelvemonth Saville existed, in apparently renovated health, and with the sprightly glow of gratitude to Heaven, and of hope to continue some more years with the friends and children he so tenderly loved. At seven next Thursday evening, this latest comfort leaves me for ever. That dismal day, if I live to see it rise, I shall pass at Matlock, in solitude and woe. Few, in all probability, will be its annual returns to me; but few or more in number, silence and sorrow shall always consecrate its fatal hours.

DR. WHALLEY,

Park Hall, near Alcester, Warwickshire,

July 27, 1804.

On the 15th of May last, a fair visionary appeared

at three o'clock, in my dressing-room. Many weeks had passed since I had heard from her. She was travelling alone to Eccleshall, and fortunately escaped encountering the malicious gnome of the Close, whose persecuting actions, false and slanderous assertions, sanguinary politics, intolerant and Pharisaic religion, form a tissue of contradictions to that Christianity whose name is ever on his lips and never in his heart. Our interview was stolen and dangerous, and her escape from him fortunate. He turned out of the Deanery Court when she was approaching, at fifty yards' distance. Luckily, he did not turn his head till she was safe within my gates. She stayed but one hour. Even on its rapid course you were not forgotten, and she bid me remember her to you, with every kindness, when next I wrote. She showed me the beautiful sonnet, which you had addressed to her, 'The Guernsey Lily.' I was permitted to detain, that I might transcribe it. Very beautiful it is. Of her destiny, I can tell you no better tidings than you learnt from herself. There is no speck of sunshine in its cold and tempestuous horizon. Her virtues are, with more virulence than ever, imputed to her as faults; her talents scorned; her ever innocent pursuits and actions restrained; her time wasted upon frivolous people in high life. Thus the years of her youth roll away, darkened, stupefied, coerced. From marriage or death she can only hope emancipation. While she longs for that mansion, 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest,' she is more than ever averse to the thought of exchanging her galling fetters, for chains which may be not less heavy, and with greater probability of proving indissoluble. Escaped the gulf of a heartless union, she will no longer venture near the brink; yet I cannot conceive how it should be that with such a constellation of graces and intelligence, high birth, and prospect

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

of great fortune, no kindred spirit teaches her love and promises her liberty. I have sometimes, on our seldom correspondence, urged her, for my sake, as well as for her own, to cease from thus encasing her affections in ice; but she is inexorable on the theme. . . .

Miss V

Matlock, Aug. 2, 1804, 2 o'clock.

My dear friend, the fatal, fatal day is come! - yet five hours of life, and health, and hope, remained in all the cunning flattery of nature, promising duration! I have been pouring forth the anguish of this day's sensations to her who sprung from him, whose extinction at evening, spread over the sun, to these eyes, the impervious veil of desolation. After short and interrupted slumbers, unblessed by any distinct idea of my soul's chosen friend, on that the anniversary of his last human sleep, I waked at day-dawn. - Alas! with what sensations, my dear friend's congenial imagination will but too faithfully conceive! It will truly tell her that I count the hours, the minutes, with all the woe, if not the horror, with which the condemned criminal enumerates them on the day of execution. This hour twelvemonth, how little did I think that, ere the evening closed, that voice, which was speaking to me in the sweetest and most sprightly tones, would be mute for ever in this world! - those graceful features, beaming with intellect and affection, marked for ever, by dreary ghastly inanity, for the dark and narrow house. O miserable, miserable consciousness, how it frowns away peace and comfort from my heart! The sublime and curtained rocks, on which I this moment gaze, have echoed his harmonious voice in Dr. Arne's beautiful hunting song - 'With hounds and with horn I'll waken the day.' That happy period was this time nineteen years, when he and I, with a party of eight from Lichfield and Derbyshire,

made an excursion to this romantic scene, and its environs. With what spirit, what gaiety, did he pour that strain amid the echoing mountains! My impatient irrational soul yet, at moments, refuses to believe that never human ear shall listen to those tones again!

O! this swarm, not only of strangers, but of people to whom individually our attention is due! How that necessity corrodes the melancholy and aching heart! – but the seclusion of this dreaded day has been, and shall be inviolate; – only to those will I speak, who can understand the language of my woes – who will imagine it ere it rises to their eye on this paper. Ere long it may meet my dear friend's eyes, if I receive a letter that shall bid it seek her – and teach it whither to travel.

I sent you a long epistle yesterday, and hope it will reach you safely. It is near three! – my kind friend's thoughts, I know, travel with mine the dreary journey of this day's hours. Adieu! Adieu! – to silent and every minute augmenting anguish, be the remaining portion consigned!

Some few words added, – it is now near four! – and these eyes had looked their last! – but all unconsciously – to him or myself; for yet, yet he lived in health and hope! O could I have divined! – but it is a mercy that I did not; that my terror and anguish disturbed not his few departing moments!

It has struck eight – all was over! – and my last gleam of comfort from the reflection I mentioned to you, and on which my spirit clung, is passed away! Farewell till I hear from you again, my sweet friend, who would so fain console me, the forlorn of heart – but *that* fate forbids!

MRS. MARY POWYS,

Winterbourne, Oct. 18, 1804.

On my road hither, the 14th of last month, I

dispatched a long letter to you from Newport. An apprehension haunts me that it may possibly be lost through the carelessness of the mail-coachman, who promised to put it into the post-office at Bristol; but I will not, till I know its fate, recapitulate the contents.

Pleased with the rural comforts and active exertions of my little friend, in her habitation of ancient days, I have passed my time much to my satisfaction. A potent spell, however, drew me from her during a fortnight of the elapsed five weeks.

I was surprised, on arriving here, to find myself only eighteen miles distant from my long-valued and beloved Mr. Whalley. When he last wrote to me I had not formed the design of proceeding so far into Gloucestershire, and his letter stated a design of going to Cheltenham early in this month, on account of his deeply-impaired health. For that reason I did not mean to inform him of my near approach. He heard of it, however, from a lady in this neighbourhood, and wrote immediately to press my hastening to his seat amongst the Mendip mountains; said he had resigned all idea of Cheltenham this year, and that he longed to introduce me to his lately-married lady.

I went thither on the 29th of September. Thirteen years ago I passed six weeks in that Alpine habitation. Increasing wealth and fine taste have since transformed and enlarged an elegant cottage on the brow of Mendip to an Italian villa, superbly furnished; extended every way his steep and lawny walks; and placed before his house, and to its whole length, a Tuscan veranda. It is the loveliest architectural luxury I ever traversed, peculiarly calculated for the almost dizzy elevation on which the mansion stands, and for the extreme of light which it chastises, and which was given by large sashes, the whole height of the apartments, from every one of which, on the second

floor, we step out into the gay veranda. Those consist of two drawing-rooms and a boudoir. The arches of the veranda are light iron-work, painted green. Its breadth allows three to walk abreast. The shelving roof is also painted green, the floor a mosaic sale-cloth; the circular seats at the end have each a large pier-glass, reflecting a part of the beautiful vale below; the coved-sides are fine painted glass. Twenty-four large china jars were filled with autumnal flowers, and one of them placed under every arch. All the sitting-rooms are on the second floor; servants apartments on the ground floor; but no culinary operations are carried on there. To this villa urbana there is a villa rustica, which is the cook's region. It is placed sixty steps lower, and hid amongst trees, a covered-way leading from it to the Arcadian palace above. That is seen from the vale below for two miles on the great western road from Bristol, and it looks as if it had dropt from the clouds; and indeed when we stand in the veranda, or look from the bed-room windows on the third floor, we seem suspended between earth and heaven, and inhale an atmosphere peculiarly sublimated.

The vale below is of twelve miles extent, ere the amber waves of the Bristol Channel divide England from the Cambrian shores. Lesser hills, rich woods, lawns, and fields, a profusion of gentlemen's seats, with villages, 'half hid in tufted trees,' with their steeples or towers, vouch for the enjoyment of social pleasures, and for the national advantage of great population. There is a noble dining-room backwards, on the second storey, adorned by fine pictures; the glory of which is a full-length portrait of Mrs. Siddons, by Hamilton. It is a speaking, a beautiful, an exquisite likeness, by which her charming face and figure, drawn in the prime of her life and beauty, should go down to posterity. She is in the character of Hill's Zara, at

the moment in which she exclaims, with extended hands,

'Can it be Osman speaks—and speaks to Zara?'

but I have not time to proceed in my description of this grand saloon, nor of the result of that poetic imagination which formed the wood-wild walks, ascending and descending the sylvan steep, or of the green terrace which zones the whole mountain to an extent of three quarters of a mile, commanding a perpetual change of the scenery beneath.

I staid at Mendip-Lodge ten days. Its new mistress is gentle, kind, and good, and sensible, though reserved, three other ladies were of our party.

I gazed around, wherever I went, whatever I saw, with tearful, though admiring eyes, for O! to those charming scenes, dear lost Saville had been often invited by Mr. Whalley; always purposed going—and now! alas! the consciousness that his eyes can never behold them, weighed about my heart and shrouded their beauties.

At Mrs. Hannah More's, who lives in that valley, I passed one morning, and she was once at Mendip while I staid there. Her friend, the Countess of Waldegrave, came with her.

After a twelve years estrangement from Sophia Weston that was, Mrs. Pennington that is, Mr. Whalley undertook to reconcile us, divided as we had been by an ingenuousness on my part, which I thought necessary to her welfare, but which her spirit was too high to brook. She lives at the Hot Wells, Bristol, and is a woman of admirable talents, and graceful manners. She received me with tears of returning love, and our reconciliation was perfect. She made me promise to stay with her a few days on my way back to Winterbourne.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

Maria¹ and Emmeline, of Edgeworths-Town, both settled in that city, sought me with much kindness, and spoke with apparent delight of my attentions to them in their infancy, and of the hours they called happily spent beneath my father's roof. They have heard recently from poor Lovel. Alas! he is still in the clutches of the detestable tyrant, Buonaparte, and complains heavily of the unwholesome climate of Verdun. Mrs. Beddows is like her mother, but neither she nor her sister, Mrs. King, have any traces of their father. I thought them agreeable, but a few hours do not enable us to know if people talk from a reservoir or a spring. I inquired after them on arriving at Mrs. Pennington's, but should not have sought them, uncertain of my reception, had they not sought me. The consciousness that they passed several years under the care of my soul's dear Honora, gave me an insuppressive interest in seeing, and in listening to them. They drew back the curtains of the past. I bend my homeward course to-morrow; but shall not reach Lichfield in less than ten days, having promised Mr. Mitchel to resume his habitation as I go back. Adieu!

WALTER SCOTT, Esq.,

Lichfield, March 7, 1805.

DEAR SIR, — It is not easy for me to express how poignant my sense of the literary obligations with which you have honoured me. The Lay of the Last Minstrel valuably enhances those high-prized treasures.

My last letter to you, in August 1803, written while a competent share of health was mine, and while hope and peace were inmates of my bosom, was closed and sent away beneath the sudden death which tore from

* Maria Edgeworth.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

me health, and peace, and every earthly hope. Indispensable business pressing upon my attention, and claiming my exertion when my shocked soul needed rest, probably brought on, by degrees, the present excess of a malady to which I have been subject these many past years, a dizziness of head, in more or less degree, always upon me, and which has, since the 25th of October last, increased with dangerous force, amounting to sudden paroxysms, in which all the surrounding objects seem falling into chaos. These paroxysms are brought on by every attempt to stoop my head to read or write with any continuance. Thus am I obliged to employ an amanuensis for my letters, and to procure a friend to read to me audibly whatever I wish to peruse; nor can I sustain, without danger, a continued attention, and still less a chain of intense thinking. By this strange mysterious malady, which medicine has tried to combat in vain, the remnant of my days is destined to a gloomy suspension of every intellectual industry.

REV. R. FELLOWS,

Lichfield, May 22, 1805.

It soothes me that you regret the not having sought my personal society, while only a distance of thirty miles divided us. Procrastination steals away, from time to time, our interesting purposes; till, and perhaps suddenly, unforeseen events occur, which render them unattainable, and leave the future to reproach the past. A deep reproach for the weakness of long delay where least I meant omission, do the years irrevocably fled make to my remaining life. I suffered circumstances, which I might have overruled, to suspend one of the dearest plans of my heart, till it sunk in the grave of a friendship; a local devotion which once had been paid with ineffable delight, cannot now be paid but with agony.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

MISS PONSONBY,

Lichfield, June 13, 1805.

WITH a trembling hand, my beloved Miss Ponsonby, do I take up the pen to thank you for a thrice kind letter. It had not remained several weeks unacknowledged, but for this terrible malady of the head, which has oppressed me with so much severity during the interim. I think it must soon lay me low. Not at my time of life does the constitution, pushed from its equipoise by long enduring disease, regain it amid the struggles.

Immediately on receiving your last, I sent for *Madoc*; by far the most captivating work of its genuinely inspired author. Unable to read myself, Miss Susan Seward gave its poetic wonders to my charmed ear, in her just and pleasing, though not very varied recitation. Soon after we had gone through it, she left me, and my friend, Miss Fern, became my guest. She reads verse with dramatic eloquence, and the most harmonious cadence. Insatiate with a single hearing, though so recently gratified, I requested her to pour again upon my eager attention, its heart-felt interests and graces. Yet more than by the first impression was I delighted.

.

Our young friend Cary has published his translation of Dante's *Inferno*. It is thought the best which has appeared, and the sale goes on well. He presents a copy to yourself and Lady Eleanor, and I trust you will receive it soon.

The *Inferno* is a great storehouse of poetic images, but almost all of them have come down to us in Spencer, Milton, and other poets, so that the chief amusement this volume gives me is from my tracing the plagiarisms which have been made from it by more interesting and pleasing bards than Dante; since there

is little for the heart, or even for the curiosity as to story, in this poem. Then the plan is most clumsily arranged: Virgil, and three talking quadrupeds, the guides; an odd association.

The poet, being his own hero, involves, by necessity, an unpleasing quantity of egotism, while the perpetual question and answer, so long continued, proves very wearisome with its endless 'said I,' and 'said he'. Then such a succession of torments for poor frail mortals! such broiling, gashing, freezing, and whirling!! Terror, terror, nothing but terror, and to no possible use, since its description obtains no faith by which to repel temptation and purify morals. I trust Cary has done justice to his original, since in his numbers the poetry is often grand.

What a triumph for the muses, and for the rising century, that one year has produced the best translation extant of a classic so renowned, and two such original epic poems, as the Lay of the Last Minstrel, and the Madoc! How do their unborrowed charms reproach the envious and narrow-minded asserters that the well-spring of genuine poetry is exhausted! Such detractors always did and always will exist. Owls love to make a noon-day darkness.

What strange times are these! The king and family are expected very shortly in this town. It is possible they may chance to look at these episcopal apartments of mine, and its gardens. I cannot appear before them ill as I am, and unable to stand still even half a minute, though I can walk without much difficulty in the recesses of my disorder. This is the fourth king of England who visits our city. Its three preceding royal guests were not fortunate. Richard the Second slept in Lichfield on his road from Ireland, not long before his deposition; Charles the First in a late period of his unfortunate wars, when he was driven from Leicester; and James the Second, a short

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

time ere he shot from his royal sphere. No one, however, will dare to whisper to our present monarch, that a Lichfield sojourn may be ominous.

To —.

Lichfield, Jan. 27, 1806.

At last

‘The extravagant and erring spirit hath hied
To his dark confine,’

covered with the lavished blood of slaughtered millions, and answerable for the anguish of millions surviving to mourn the slain.¹

Dr. Parr, the wise and eloquent, called upon me after we had dined, on Tuesday last, staid an hour, and afterwards joined our party at Mr. Muckleston’s for the remainder of the evening. He was accompanied by his intelligent fellow-traveller, Mr. Green. Dr. Parr’s articulation, always thick and hurried, is now, by the loss of his teeth, become almost wholly unintelligible to my time-dulled ear. The intense attention with which I bent my head to listen while he talked, and the fumes of his pipe of tobacco, proved so injurious to my disorder, that the next day I had three slight paroxysms of my alarming dizziness; just such as you saw brought on at your house, when Miss —’s tide of loquacity about nothing, deluged our quadrille table.

Our friend, the Doctor, has a habit of striking his clenched hand on the table while he declaims, which contributes to drown his confluent utterance. He talks of coming to me on his return from Manchester. Ah! if I was in health, what pleasure should I have in receiving him! — but in my present state of malady,

¹ Alluding to the death of Mr. Pitt.

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

should he stay many days, I shall be the martyr of my anxiety to hear him, and of an atmosphere so injurious to my perilous disorder. Indeed, dear friend, I am in a state to which the utmost quiet is necessary, and I am now trying to repair the mischiefs of that evening by a large blister on my head; that evening, in which I sat like Tantalus in the river, trying to catch the stream of oratory which perpetually eluded my efforts.

DR. WHALLEY,

Lichfield, April 2, 1806.

. . . To my conceptions, no instance of infatuation can excite my wonder more than to find you, my dear friend, amongst the infatuated idolators of his country's destroyer,¹ and the incendiary of Europe, goading it on and on in the bloody paths of ruin. For one million, which his only wise measure, the Sinking Fund, has saved Great Britain, his system of dark revenge and pitiless slaughter has squandered ten.

That money was not Mr. Pitt's personal coveting is little merit. Paying nobody, he had no use for it, and nothing did he care for the distress of his creditors. If he did not embezzle the public treasures for his private use, he, with perhaps worse guilt, lavished them in bribing others to support his criminal lust of power. You accuse me of hating Mr. Pitt. Filled as my soul has been since the year 1793 with involuntary and unprejudiced horror at the death and desolation, and cureless misery, with which he has loaded Europe, and blasted the fair prosperity of these water-walled dominions, how can I avoid detesting him? If our aversion ought to be proportioned to the degree of evil which individuals have inflicted, who is there so widely guilty?

¹ William Pitt died on January 23, 1806.

The consequences of his last plan of desperation, predicted in my letter, the arguments I brought to demonstrate the moral certainty of its failure, you tell me, in reply, do not deserve either the name of reasoning or of argument! Alas! the event has deeply confirmed their claim to nationality. It appears by the papers, relative to that mad coalition, which have been laid before the House of Commons, and to which Mr. Pitt's partisans looked for his justification in attempting it, that the instigator himself confessed, the junction of a force five hundred thousand strong, to be assembled from remote parts of Europe, was necessary to give it a chance of success. Was it in common sense to conceive that Napoleon would not prevent the conjunction of such a force? Was he the man supinely to suffer it?

That minister's death should not have been natural but expiatory, who had staked, on such a wild uncharacteristic possibility, the infinite increase of danger to this country, and the utter loss of those small remains of power which his former plans had left to Austria, to the German Principalities, and to a part of Italy. You say this miserable plan averted French invasion from these shores last summer. True; but it was only to find 'short intermission brought with double danger' — a danger which, but for Mr. Pitt, could never have approached these islands. Had he, instead of joining the baffled nations, which had unjustly united to dismember France, as they dismembered Poland, had he stood forth the pacificator instead of the incendiary, and averted the horrid contest, no hostile troops had ever menaced our confines. He has finished his sanguinary work, and it is too late to save Great Britain, though her true patriots are now called to the helm. Though continued war must destroy us, he has rendered peace, in all likelihood unattainable. And we are raising statues to his memory! Thus we

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

do fulfil the saying of one of the holy prophets, 'God first makes mad the nation he means to destroy for its wickedness' The wrongs of Poland, the shocking injustice of the triple alliance against that unhappy country, convince me that I behold the avenging arm of Heaven punishing the murderous Russians, and their scarcely less barbarous ally, on the field of Austerlitz. The wretched Pitt was its instrument in goading them on to their retributory doom, and in avenging Poland upon her foes. Sooner or later, Prussia will be involved in their destiny. Thus is the bloody chalice returned to the lips of the cruel.

Pardon me, my friend, that the miseries I bewail have again risen to my pen. When we meet, if it please God that we ever meet, I will endeavour to restrain the bitter consciousness from forcing itself on your angry attention.

REV. ROBERT FELLOWES,

Lichfield, May 31, 1806.

Mr. Wordsworth has undoubtedly genius, and charming passages are to be found in his verse; but on the whole, it is not first rate; often meanly familiar, and almost as often turgid and obscure; therefore I cannot think his judgment and decisions should be implicitly received. He is right in observing, that the use of common life simple language in verse, is frequently a beauty, but not right in extending that use to all modes of phraseology within the limits of the immodest, the disgusting, and the ungrammatic.

REV. RICH. SYKES of Westalla,

Lichfield, June 26, 1806.

I have survived the dear friends of my youth whose habitations were near mine. Kind voices speak to me now, but they are the voices of later years. They who once listen to me, but they cannot talk with me

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

in the animation of conscious remembrance concerning the events and associates of my blossomed life; of those customs and manners which have so changed their character. Art and labour have given richness to cultivation, taste has made every garden a landscape, and architecture has expanded and adorned our mansions. Our young females are all artists. They draw, and paint, and play, sing, and dance, with professional skill, and nothing but the understanding and the heart are left incultivate. The sensibilities are sacrificed to cold vanity, ambition, and the desire of exhibiting. Thus the charming simplicity, the fervour, and wild graces of youth are lost, which shone in the companions of my blossoming years. Is this truth, or the day-dream of waning life, which gilds the past with imaginary light, and wraps the present in gloom not less ideal? Health and parental hopes give your mind better employment than 'gathering with me the wintry wreaths of regret, and pouring the dirge of departed days'.

Adieu!

REV. H. F. CARY,

Lichfield, May 10, 1807.

MORE immediately should I have noticed the kind contents of your letter, had it arrived at a less interesting juncture. At two that day, Friday last, the poetically great Walter Scott came 'like a sun-beam to my dwelling'. I found him sturdily maintaining the necessity of limiting his inexpressibly welcome visit to the next day's noon. You will not wonder that I could spare no minutes from hours so precious and so few.

Ah! fortunate if one of your filial sojourns here had proved the means of introducing my poetic friends to each other. Such presentations are amongst my heart's luxuries. Respecting Lister, that possibility was within one day of having occurred; he called upon

me on Thursday morning, and returned to Armytage after tea.

This proudest boast of the Caledonian muse is tall, and rather robust than slender, but lame in the same manner as Mr Hayley, and in a greater measure. Neither the contour of his face, nor yet his features, are elegant; his complexion healthy, and somewhat fair, without bloom. We find the singularity of brown hair and eye-lashes, with flaxen eyebrows, and a countenance open, ingenuous, and benignant. When seriously conversing, or earnestly attentive, though his eyes are rather of a lightish grey, deep thought is on their lids; he contracts his brow, and the rays of genius gleam aslant from the orbs beneath them. An upper-lip, too long, prevents his mouth from being decidedly handsome, but the sweetest emanations of temper and of heart play about it when he talks cheerfully, or smiles; and, in company, he is much oftener gay than contemplative. His conversation, an overflowing fountain of brilliant wit, apposite allusion, and playful archness, while, on serious themes, it is nervous and eloquent. The accent decidedly Scotch, yet by no means broad. On the whole, no expectation is disappointed, which his poetry must excite in all who feel the powers and the graces of Aonian inspiration.

Not less astonishing than was Johnson's memory is that of Mr. Scott; like Johnson also, his recitation is too monotonous and violent to do justice either to his own writings, or that of others. You are almost the only poet I know, whose reading is entirely just to his muse.

Mr. White and Mr. Simpson breakfasted with us on Saturday morning. One hour only before that which he fixed for his departure, our northern luminary, by repeated and vehement solicitation, was persuaded to stay upon us till ten the next day. Mr. Simpson would have no say to his request, that the party should

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

dine and sup with him and Mrs. Simpson. The stranger guest, Scott, delighted us all by the unaffected charms of his mind and manners. He had diverged many miles from his intended track of return from our capital, to visit me ere he repassed the Tweed. Such visits are the most high-prized honours which my writings have procured for me.

MRS. BLORE of Edenzor, Derbyshire,
August 8, 1807.

My sad heart feels all the kindness of your continuing to address me on each annual day, stamped with the dire event, to address me with remembrances so consecrating. It feels also with increased, instead of diminished pangs, the melancholy accumulation of the distancing years. Every one, as it passes, seems to push the dear image of our lost lamented friend into dimmer regions of the past.

During the first twelvemonth of my privation I found a mournful sweetness in being able to say to myself, — this day last year the friend of my soul illuminated this city, his own dear Lichfield, the walls and surrounding bowers of my habitation. Then came the dread anniversary to rob me of that precious consciousness; and the ‘this day two years,’ to which it reduced me, brought a doubling sense of privation. Time added a third year, and dismally widened the gulf between the present and the past — and now a fourth is come, and many are the inhabitants of a city whose brightest ornament through a long period he was, many that never beheld, never listened to him. That is another painful consequence of the flight of time; and O! since it is not in the power of that universal overwhelmer to push him from my memory, the shadow of those vast wings, darkening the dear image yet more and more, increases the poignance of my regrets. How dreary, how chilling cold is this

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

used also to reign over the hearts of his audience,—will be able to employ his thoughts on the conjugation of verbs, and the toil of translation, to gather husks of learning, when the seed-time and harvest-time of infancy has passed by. Kemble is a scholar and a fine actor, but his sister is a finer, and knows no language but her own.

I was delighted to observe that Henry Betty's wonderful and unremitted exertions have not injured his constitution. His beautiful complexion has the deep glow of health, and his eyes its clearest lustre. His appetite is keen as *Gil Blas*'; he grows fast, and is plump and stout, and his voice is recovering fast from its 'mannish crack,' as Shakespeare calls it. One of the players told me that it had greatly improved in the preceding six weeks. On its first break he should have been removed from the stage till it had acquired strength and fulness of tone. I believe it will be a very fine voice. The public have taken up the idea that it is spoiled, and perhaps the prejudice will be hard of removal. How often does excellence combat prejudice in vain!

If he lives and retains his health, tallness of figure will increase the power of that transcendent grace of motion already his; and I have no doubt but he will be a great and universal actor. His *Loony Mactwatter* has every excellence of Garrick's *Abel Druggier*; the same simplicity of pure humour, nothing indebted to grimace and caricature. He set his audience in a roar of laughter, without one lurking, betraying smile on his own countenance,—precisely the dirty, ragged, lousy Irish trumper, with that mixture of odd, wild, yet grave wit and credulous folly, which mark the character of the Hibernian peasantry,—and his language was native and incessant.

His astonishing transformation of half an hour from the graceful and impassioned *Rox*, summoned to the

block, and bending with agonised tenderness over his swooning wife, displayed to us all the versatility of his powers.

Surely Wordsworth must be mad as was ever the poet Lee. Those volumes of his, which you were so good to give me, have excited, by turns, my tenderness and warm admiration, my contemptuous astonishment and disgust. The two latter rose to their utmost height while I read about his dancing daffodils, ten thousand, as he says, in high dance in the breeze beside the river, whose waves dance with them, and the poet's heart, we are told, danced too. Then he proceeds to say, that in the hours of pensive or of pained contemplation, these same capering flowers flash on his memory, and his heart, losing its cares, dances with them again.

Surely if his worst foe had chosen to caricature this egotistic manufacturer of metaphysic importance upon trivial themes, he could not have done it more effectually! Whenever Mr. Wordsworth writes naturally he charms me, as in the Kitten and the Falling Leaves; Verses to the Spade of a Friend; Written on Brother's Water Bridge; The Sailor's Mother; three or four of the sonnets, and above all the Leech-Gatherer, which is a perfectly original and striking poem. If he had written nothing else, that composition might stamp him a poet of no common powers. The sonnet written on Westminster Bridge is beautiful, unaffected, and grandly picturesque.

The ode, second volume, p. 147, is a mixture of his successful and unsuccessful attempts at sublimity. I delight in the first five stanzas; — then it goes rumbling down the dark profound of mysticism, whither my comprehension strives to follow him in vain. The lovely stanzas are a manifest imitation of an ode of Coleridge's, of very superior beauty, beginning, 'Well, if the bard was weather-wise,' &c.

Two letters from the poetically-great Southey have delighted me much. My avowed sense of Madoc's poetic excellence having reached his ear, it procured me the honour of its author's correspondence. He excites my concern and indignation by saying, that the profits on a year's sale of that glorious poem, amounted to L. 3: 17: 1, a deep disgrace to the national sensibility and judgment.

Critics, who are either incapable of feeling poetic beauty, and mistake sublimity for bombast, or fraudulently withhold the praise they know to be due, are alike the foes of individual genius, and of the national credit, when thus they labour to rob a first-rate poet of fortune and of early celebrity. What caterpillars in the bright roses of poetry, what wasps and hornets on the feet of Colossal literature, are such impotent, or such dishonest deciders!

If I live I shall hope to see you again my guest, and for a longer period than that of your first, and recent and dearly welcome visit, with all that kindness of heart and hilarity of spirit which are so much your own, and which act upon our feelings like a May-day sun. Adieu!

MRS. STOKES,

Lichfield, Oct. 25, 1807.

ALAS yes, it was my friend whom you saw on the list of the wounded.—Hastings is wounded irreparably, though not mortally; mutilated in the prime of youthful manhood, for he is not yet thirty-three; the firmest, and yet the gentlest spirit that ever animated a pleasing and graceful form. You were charmed by the intelligence of his countenance, the unaffected grace of his manners, and the music of his voice in speaking during the transient period in which you conversed with him here.

You ask me now of his story, and I shall give it you briefly as I may. — Captain Hastings, of the 82nd regiment of foot, is a distant branch of Lord Moira's family; his only inheritance a gentleman's education and his sword. When scarcely more than twenty-one he married a young Scotch lady, of gentle birth, but without fortune. Her sweetness of temper, energy of conduct, and the cheerful fortitude with which she sustained a lingering and painful disease, which she knew to be mortal, rendered her eminently worthy of that gallant and noble heart which she so devotedly possessed.

It is three years and a half since Mrs. Hastings came to Lichfield with her husband, in a deep and hopeless decline. He attended General Pigot as his aide-de-camp, who is here for the district. Their three infant girls were left at school near Edinburgh. To their mother's hapless situation the General remitted Captain Hastings's official duties. Through a whole year he watched, a ministrant angel, by the couch of the sweet sufferer, not leaving her for a single hour, till, from all its painful struggles, the beatified spirit soared away.

Before time brings its healing aid, no considerations can assuage the anguish of everlasting separation from a being exquisitely dear. Poor Hastings's sorrows bore witness to that truth; yet he paid the last duties, following the mournful procession with a step of assumed firmness, though it trembled amid the struggle, and with a pale face of tearless agony. When, bending over the dropt coffin, his eyes looked their last, the tears, that would no longer be restrained, fell in floods on the plates.

Lost to every surrounding object (and many people were present), it at length became necessary to urge his departure. At the voice of admonition he started wildly, and rushed back to his near lodgings. On

entering them he fainted away, and, on recovering, shut himself up in his apartment, nor would see, during three days, his most intimate friends, but received his food through the half-opened door.

The instant he could be prevailed upon to quit the scene of his long-enduring woes, General Pigot allotted to him an apartment in his house, and he received from him and from his lady every kind and soothing attention. A four-months leave of absence was soon granted, to pass them in Scotland with his children. He returned in amended health and spirits. The still voice of conscience was doubtless as oil upon the waves of anguish.

Widely different in age, yet a similarity in our literary taste has united with my sympathy in his sorrows, and formed a friendship between Captain Hastings and myself, which I dare believe will extend to the last hour of my life's poor remnant.

Immediately on his return from Scotland, he, out of his slender income, erected a monument in our cathedral to his beloved Agnes. Its simple elegance attracts every eye; its modest praise of her so justly dear, affects every feeling heart.

On the 26th of July last he sat in my dressing-room, expressing thankfulness for his situation with General Pigot, which, by its exemption from all self-expenditure, enabled him to defray that of his children's education. He continued he, the tears gushing from his eyes, I drop, they are indeed orphaned. Ah! how shocked was I, the next morning, when he called to say, that he had received orders to join his regiment on the instant, drafted off for the dreadful expedition to Denmark.

An eight-days sail carried my brave, unfortunate friend to the devoted shore. On the morning after our troops had landed in Zealand, the home of a respectable Danish family became exposed to the

adverse fires of the contending parties. It consisted of a man and his wife, three children, and the aged grandfather.

The husband implored Captain Hastings, who had expressed humane compassion for them, to use his interest to procure their passport from that scene of peril. It was two days before it could be obtained. Hastings then flew to the sufferers, informing them that he had not only obtained the desired grant, but also that of a regimental cart to convey them from that perilous situation.

Ah, Sir! exclaimed the unhappy man, weeping, your goodness comes too late. We have not tasted food these two days; my wife, my father, my infants are perishing. Too weak to travel, we must stay and die. Captain Hastings instantly took the wallet from his shoulder, which contained that day's provision, and placed it before the famished man; he also begged from his brother-officers a portion of theirs, sufficient to recruit the fainting strength of the whole group, who, delivered from impending death, doubtless went on their way blessing their kind and generous preserver.

The next morning Sir David Baird came up to Hastings - 'You have led your company into a too exposed situation, take them instantly into one of less peril.' The moment he had uttered these words a twenty-four pound cannon-ball tore off Captain Hastings's left arm, and dashed to pieces the head of his friend and lieutenant, whose brains, mixing with my dear friend's blood, filled the collar of his coat.

Hastings did not fall, but, with his arm hanging near his feet, walked a quarter of a mile through a heavy cannonade. Then, having passed the line of battle, he sat on a stone, and suffered immediate amputation.

He lay forty-eight hours on wheaten-straw in a hovel. The ears of the straw, insinuating themselves through

the bloody collar, added their torments in these painful hours. At length he was removed to the commissary's house, who resigned his bed to him, and watched him, and comforted him with a brother's kindness.

The regularity of the sufferer's past life, the sweetness of his temper, and his cheerful patience, made recovery rapid. He had no fever, though much annoyed by strange nervous sensations, which represented the lost arm and hand as still attached to his body, with perpetual convulsive openings and closings of the imaginary fingers, which often seem to dart their nails into the clenched palm. He has not, to this instant, lost the incessant recurrence of these cruel sensations, which must be as though the phantom of a dear departed friend were ever in one's sight, mute, companionless, ghastly.

On his home-voyage he was dreadfully afflicted by the consequences of tempestuous weather, which continually beat the unhealed stump against the sides of the cot in which he lay.

On the 29th of last month he walked into my dressing-room, pale and emaciated, but smiling cheerfully, and stretching towards me his only hand. Never were joy and grief so mingled in my soul; they shook my whole frame and deluged my eyes.

'I am well,' said he, 'my kind friend; I am happy, my appetite is good: in the daytime I combat my involuntary phantasies by diverting my attention from them - when they shall cease to break my rest, my health will become firm. - My children have yet a father!'

Dependence on his re-established health is not so lively with me. I fear he is deeply shaken. - Something of ghostliness lurks beneath his smiles.

Surely government will make some recompense to this excellent young man, blighted in his prime in

their cause. Recompense! – alas, nor professional rank, nor all the gold in the treasury can do that; but a portion of it for his dear childrens sake would be welcome. Adieu!

(The following letter, addressed to the editor of her poetical works, Sir Walter Scott, was the last of Anna Seward's to be printed. Scott introduced it in these words: 'In March 1809, the editor had the pain of receiving the last farewell of his honoured friend. It is written at intervals, and the handwriting gradually degenerates from the distinct and beautiful manuscript which Miss Seward used to write, into a scrawl so feebly traced as to be nearly illegible.'))

You may believe, dear and admired friend, it was no trivial cause, no idle procrastination, that kept me silent four months and a week to a letter of yours, the humour, wit, and kindness of which recompensed its delay. Early in our late Siberian December, I was proposing to address you, when a violent fever, with alarming hæmorrhage seized my weak frame.

During five days and nights, it put my life into peril. In all that time I was unable to swallow the least atom of solids, whilst my thirst was raging and unquenchable. On the 6th day the fever abated and some degree of appetite returned; but the disease has shook my weak frame to its foundation. The fever abated, but it is not yet subdued. Sometimes I have a few hours intermission, but my pulse remaining at 90, and 60 is my pulse of health, the medical people will not consent to my taking the bark. Much writing is forbid me; indeed, its effect is sufficiently forewarning, since the moment I begin to think intensely, the pen falls from my hand, a lethargic sensation creeps over me, and I doze. Not more than by a page a day shall I attempt to proceed with this snail of an epistle. I had

two reasons for wishing to have written to you sooner; gratitude, and the desire of presenting you with one of the three copies which my poetical friend, Mr Mundy, has sent me to present to three chosen friends. Though printed, it is not published and consequently unpurchasable.

Monday 13th of March.

So far was written Monday the 6th of this month, when again the lethargy crept on. I fell asleep, and awoke in a raging fever and high delirium. Next day, after a dreadful night, the physician ordered me to lose six ounces of blood, and that not in the slightest degree abating the fever, he took six ounces more on the eve, and all without effect. I feel all the props of my life giving way, and probably this is the last time I shall ever write anything in the shape of a letter; but I have procured a frank, and am unwilling it should be useless. It is for Thursday next. Considering my pains, my raging thirst, my utter debility, it would be a mercy if I should not be in existence on that day.

If I knew where to find you, I would send the copy of Mundy's Poems, but I am loth to put you to the expence of its carriage, except I should send it to you in London. I am not able to add more than what I think will be my last benediction on you and yours. O! what a blessing is a sudden death! I always prayed for it, but am not worthy to have my prayer granted.

I thank you for all your kindness, and for the delightful hours your talents have given me.

Affectionately your friend,

A. SEWARD.

It is Thursday, and each intervening day since I closed my letter has taken large death strides upon me.

"(This melancholy letter," wrote Sir Walter Scott,
308

THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD

'was too true an augury of the event which it anticipated. Upon Thursday, the 23rd of March, 1809, Miss Seward was seized with an universal stupor, which continued until the 25th, at six o'clock in the evening, when she expired')

BOOKS OF REFERENCE

The Poetical Works of Anna Seward, 1788-1807, *with her Literary Correspondence*, etc., etc., with a Life and a Portrait of Anna Seward by Sir Walter Scott, 3 vols., 1810.

Letters of Anna Seward, written between 1788 and 1807, edited by A. Constable, 6 vols., 1811.

Journals and Correspondence of Dr. Warton, edited by H. W. Wickham, 2 vols., 1803.

A Swan and her Friends, by E. A. Lucas, 1927.

Doctor Darius, by Hesketh Pearson, 1930.

The Singing Swan, by Margaret Ashmun, 1931.

INDEX

INDEX

- Addison, Joseph, 27, 127
 Akenside, Mark, 249
 André, Major John, 20-1, 22, 101,
 105, 107, 226, 230
 Anspach, Margravina of, 215
 Arden, Captain, 212
 Arden, Miss, 203
 Arne, Dr., 282
 Arnold, General, 230
 Aston, Elizabeth, 75-6
 Aston, Molly, 116, 128-9
 Aston, Sir Thomas, 128
- Bagot, Lord, 205
 Baird, Sir David, 305
 Beattie, James, 67
 Beauclerk, Lady Diana, 205
 Berwick, Rev., 118
 Betty, Master, 298-301
 Bilsbury, Rev. Dewhurst, 250
 Bingham, Capt and Mrs., 231
 Blore, Mrs., 275, 297
 Bonaparte, Napoleon, 28, 287, 293
 Boothby, Sir Brooke, 254, 267,
 276
 Boothby, Miss Hill, 116, 130
 Bossuet, J. B., 235
 Boswell, James, 9, 10, 23-5, 66,
 74-82, 86, 88-91, 120, 128, 136,
 140-1, 153-6
 Brandish, Miss, 153
 Broglie, Marshal, 164
 Bunyan, John, 35
 Bürger, G. A. (*his Lenore*), 205
 Burns, Robert, 33, 102, 237
 Butler, Lady Eleanor, 169, 171,
 173, 176, 178, 180, 183, 191,
 208, 222, 224, 239, 289
- Carnegy, Lady M., 73
 Cary, Rev. H. F., 31, 114-5, 118,
 125, 130, 153-6, 165, 220, 289,
 290, 295
 Charles I., 290
 Charles II., 237
 Chatterton, Thomas, 33, 68, 233-5
 Chichester, Lady Harriot, 205
 Childers, Mrs., 200, 213, 231-2,
 237, 243, 258
 Cibber, Mrs., 177-8
 Clerk, Sir John and Lady, 147-8
 Clinton, General, 230
 Cobb, Moll, 151-2
 Coleridge, S. T., 33, 220-1, 232-4,
 301
 Collins, William, 80-1
 Cook, Captain, 22, 104, 112
 Cornwallis, Bishop (of Lichfield),
 268-72
 Cornwallis, 'Clarissa' (daughter of
 above), 268-75, 280-2
 Cornwallis, Mrs. (wife of above),
 270-2
 Cotton, Mrs., 98, 113
 Cowper, William, 9, 26-7, 33
 Cramer, J. B., 206-7
 Cunliffe, Lady, 176
- Dante, 31, 165, 173, 289
 Darwin, Dr. Erasmus, 17-8, 19,
 21, 33, 49, 50, 72-3, 137, 142,
 144, 247-8, 250-4, 267-8, 275-7
 Darwin, Mrs. Erasmus, 73, 137
 Darwin, Dr. Robert (son of Eras-
 mus), 247-8, 252
 Day, Thomas, 20, 124-5
 Day, Mrs. Thomas, 124-5

11 12 13 14 15

- 22

INDEX

- Lawley, Lady, 189, 205
 Lely, Sir Peter, 33, 204
 Lister, Thomas, 114-5, 118, 130, 295
 Liangkollen, Ladies of, 31, 169-74, 209
 Lyttleton, Lord, 55

 Macaulay, Lord, 11, 134
 Macdonald, Flora, 82
 Mansel, Dr., 31
 Mary, Queen, 25, 81
 Mason, William, 33, 67, 202
 Mayo, Dr., 82
 Miller, Lady, 21
 Milton, John, 14, 33, 80-1, 113, 188, 221, 237, 241, 249-50, 289
 Mompessan, Mrs. 82-7, 137, 195
 Montague, Elizabeth, 90
 More, Hannah, 31, 93, 286
 Mundy, Mr., 308

 Nelson, Lord, 231
 Newcomine, Lady, 231
 Newton, W. (The Peak Minstrel), 93, 102, 147-8, 178-9

 Ovid, 249

 Park, Thomas, 184, 220, 233, 249
 Parr, Dr. Samuel, 31, 150-1, 155, 291
 Percy, Bishop, 30
 Phillips, Lee, 277
 Pigot, General, 303-4
 Piozzi, Mr., 104-6, 128
 Piozzi, Mrs. (*see* Thrale)
 Pitt, William, 28-9, 291-4
 Pomfret, John, 235
 Ponsonby, Sarah, 169, 173, 176, 180, 185, 209, 222, 224, 229, 239, 289
 Pool, Colonel Chandos, 73
 Pope, Alexander, 36

 Porter, Joseph, 19, 39-47, 49, 54
 Porter, Lucy, 24-5, 39-45, 71, 74, 76-7, 87-8, 110, 112, 116, 128-9, 155
 Porter, Mr. (father of the above), 78
 Powys, Mrs., 161, 186, 205, 209, 229, 244, 247, 283
 Price, Mrs., 188, 204
 Prior, Matthew, 80-1
 Pritchard, Mrs., 177-8

 Quarles, Francis, 33

 Regent, Prince, 132, 188, 237
 Reid, Thomas, 125
 Richard II, 290
 Richardson, Samuel, 133
 Richmond, Duke of, 106-8
 Roberts, Rev. Edward, 236
 Romney, George, 22, 118, 146, 226

 Samwell, David, 160
 Sandwich, Lord, 107
 Saraszin, General, 232
 Saville, John ("Giovanni") 18, 21-2, 25-7, 29-30, 34, 64, 68-9, 72, 105, 120, 142-5, 147-50, 156-8, 186, 191, 194, 206-8, 211, 213, 228, 241, 244-6, 249-50, 254-67, 271, 276-8, 280, 282-3, 286, 297
 Scarborough, Lady, 205
 Scott, Sir Walter, 11, 32-4, 63, 254, 287, 295-7, 298, 307-9
 Seward, Canon (Anna's father), 14, 15-6, 18, 27-9, 44, 49, 52-3, 93-9, 107-8, 118, 125, 134, 197, 259, 264
 Seward, Mrs. (Anna's mother), 21, 38-9, 44, 49, 52-3, 54, 56, 59, 74-5, 77
 Seward, Sarah (Anna's sister), 14, 19, 39-57, 177, 259

INDEX

- Seward, Captain (Anna's cousin), 21, 100, 106
 Shaftesbury, Lord, 27
 Shakespeare, 14, 26, 33, 80, 90, 133, 136, 158, 180, 221, 237, 249
 Shenstone, William, 31
 Siddons, Sarah, 68-70, 91-3, 168-9, 178, 285-6
 Smith, Mrs. Charlotte (The Swan of Bignor), 27
 Smith, Mrs. (Saville's daughter), 105, 142-3, 191, 245-6, 257-8
 Smythe, Chris., 183
 Soeyd, Honora, 14, 19-21, 38, 41-2, 43-6, 48, 52-4, 56-9, 61-2, 105, 132, 146, 177, 226-7, 244, 259, 287
 Somerset, Duke of, 183-4
 Southey, Robert, 32-3, 289, 302
 Spencer, Lord, 205
 Spencer, Edmund, 289
 Stafford, Marquis of, 107
 Stokes, Dr. and Mrs., 196, 210, 302
 Swift, Dean, 118, 166
 Sykes, Rev. Richard, 294
 Taylor, Colonel, 15-7, 211
 Taylor, Mrs., 16-9, 127, 211-2
 Tate, Dr., 196
 Thrale (Fiona), Mrs., 25, 92, 104-6, 109-13, 115-8, 120-2, 126-7, 128, 130, 135-6, 140
 Todd, Mr., 265
 Virgil, 237, 249, 290
 Vyse, Cornet, 15-6
 Waldegrave, Countess of, 286
 Walmsley, Gilbert, 36-7, 75-6, 128
 Walpole, Horace, 9
 Washington, George, 21-2, 229-30
 Weston, Sophia (Mrs. Pennington), 70, 91, 98, 121, 149, 286
 Whalley, the Rev. T. S., 30-1, 63-71, 90, 92-3, 104, 109, 141-7, 156, 161-2, 168-9, 227, 246, 254, 263, 268, 274, 280, 284, 286, 292
 Whalley, Mrs. T. S., 142, 161-2
 White, Helen, 41, 44-5
 White, Rev. Henry, 169
 Wigley, Edmund, 159, 231
 Wilberforce, William, 31, 187, 190, 205, 231
 Williams, Helen, 109, 119, 121, 134
 Wingfield, Miss, 181
 Wolseley, Capt. Robert, 241
 Wordsworth, William, 33, 249-50, 294, 301
 Yalden, Thomas, 235
 Yearsley, Ann, 93
 Young, Edward, 65

Biographies by Hesketh Pearson

LABBY

The Life and Character of Henry Labouchere

'This book is exactly right in length, shape and tone. . . . It is well and humorously written; its author has made himself thoroughly familiar with the events and people of his period. . . . Labby, small, puckish, debonair, hand in pocket, head on one side, monocle in eye, cigarette in fingers, strolls through these pages as he used to stroll through the purlieus of Westminster, throwing quips right and left at all the world's expense. It is a book to keep.' - SIR JOHN SQUIRE (*Daily Telegraph*).

Frontispiece Portrait

2nd Impression

10s. 6d. net.

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

'It is not its criticism, though that is good, which will make this book find favour. It is the skill and sympathy with which the biographer has drawn two contrasted characters and traced two successful interwoven lives.' - DESMOND MACCARTHY (*Sunday Times*).

Three Portraits

2nd Impression

10s. 6d. net.

THE SMITH OF SMITHS

Being the Life, Wit and Humour of Sydney Smith

With an Introduction by G. K. Chesterton

'Sydney Smith emerges, marvellously alive and kicking, from these pages. We see him in the round. . . . He was a happy man, and this is a happy, delightful book.' - HOWARD SPRING (*Evening Standard*).

Frontispiece Portrait

New Cheaper Edition

5s. net.

THE FOOL OF LOVE

A Life of William Hazlitt

'The story is told by Mr. Pearson with equal dignity and success.' - HUMBERT WOLFE (*Observer*).

Frontispiece Portrait

New Cheaper Edition

5s. net.

HAMISH HAMILTON, PUBLISHER

